

No date again: received September 27, 1990 from Guatemala

Dear Mom and Dad, (Sherlene's note: not for publication--just to share with grandparents--who will appreciate this):

This month has been like a great big roller-coaster ride. The main reason for this has been my current companionship. My current companion, Elder Herrera, is in the end of his mission (he now has 5 more days). He no longer studies his scriptures; he does not like to contact; he's very anxious to get home, etc. and etc.

He is very intelligent. He has taught me more than any of my other comps in how to contact, bring the Spirit into a discussion or a member visit (things which I'll try to share with you two later on in this letter). He has also taught me about many of my personal weaknesses, as well as how to strengthen and maintain positive companionships in the future.

This whole month has been a very bitter pill, but it has healed me and strengthened me for the rest of my mission--my life. It has had a very lasting impact on my life.

Anyway, yesterday I finally felt that we had crossed over our difficulties and that things were going to be O.K. Just the same, this morning we were playing basketball with some of the other missionaries in our district. We started having some problems (it appears that Elder Herrera takes his basketball very seriously, keeps all the rules perfectly, and gets quite frustrated when Elder Bartholomew makes shot after shot when he's being guarded by him). Anyway, I could tell he was getting very angry, and I told him (after he made an outburst) that I was playing to have a good time, not to make him angry, and excused myself from the game.

I sat on the sidelines and opened my Bible to study and just happened to open it to Malachi where my comp. had marked Chapter 3:13-18 and had written on the side--"Who are you serving? Remember all that I've taught you." Read the scripture, and you'll understand that he was making a very snide remark.

I have honestly worked very hard this month to be the nice guy...to put myself in his shoes...and to try and change the things that have bothered my comp. I saw his, and I began to feel very sorry for myself and very angry at the nerve of this guy.

And then Elder Herrera taught me another very valuable lesson. I had been thinking about how I'd bought him a cassette he liked and how I'd bought him some sunglasses he liked and how I'd practically supported him since he'd spent all his money early and how I'd bent over backwards to help him have a positive last month. Then, I think the Spirit started to whisper to me because I suddenly remembered....

Someone or, better said, two people who fed me, sheltered me, taught me the plan of salvation, let me drive the car, bought me

expensive presents, slaved to provide me with a good education...en  
fin...bent over backwards to give me their all so that I could have  
it all. And what did I do? I spit in their faces...held a mirror  
up to their weaknesses...reviled them...often feeling justified by  
the scriptures to openly defy and despise the ones who gave me so  
much! This message is more for you, Dad, but Mom has experienced  
it, as well. My eyes are becoming more and more opened to this  
every day. Please forgive me. I'll probably rewrite this letter  
when I have my own teenage children. We are so stupid sometimes.  
Dad, please forgive me for all the times I said you were boring or  
didn't support you in your attempts to obey a prophet of the Lord  
(devotional, family home evening, etc.). Please forgive me for  
being so crass and gross as to accept your food, support, love, and  
instruction, and then to abuse, insult, and treat you like dirt.

I'm so grateful to you for what you've given me. I know that  
when I was a spirit, I was so eager to enter your abode and receive  
your heavenly influence, your loving care, your knowledge of the  
only living and true church on the face of the earth, to take part  
in the sealing covenant, to be brought up with all the marvelous  
guides and literature designed to teach small children the plain,  
yet profound truths on which lies this great organization headed  
by Christ and a prophet from God.

I know why God has us serve missions. It's to show us our  
weaknesses, to show us the lies the world teaches, to step out of  
our old environment and then be able to look back in and see what  
in reality we've had. The Lord and you two have been so patient  
with me. I just hope I can repent sincerely of my sins. I love  
you two. I love you two. I love you two.

Eternally grateful, your son,

Elder Bartholomew (smiley face drawn)

P.S. Elder Herrar referred me to this passage of Doctrines of  
Salvation by Joseph Fielding Smith (1st book, as translated from  
Spanish):

"The Investigators Are Guided By the Light of Christ. The Lord has  
given to each man that comes into the world the guide of the Light  
of Truth, or the Spirit of Jesus Christ, and if a man lends  
attention to this Spirit, he will be carried to the truth, and he  
will recognize it and listen to it and accept it. We have seen  
this demonstrated thousands of times, that men were carried to  
investigate in spite of the prejudices and tradiciones that the  
world has taught them.

"If they refuse to come to Him, he calls them wicked, and they are  
found beneath the slavery of sin. To me, it appears that when a  
person declares he is satisfied with his religion and therefore not  
worried enough to investigate, that is evidence that he has not  
lent attention to the Light of Truth given him; otherwise, he would

not feel satisfied with false religion and would be searching for the truth."

Is it any wonder that two questions we ask when we're contacting are:

- 1) Do you profess a religion?
- 2) Are you satisfied with your religion?

This appears to be a good way to find the chosen. Roight now I'm wonderin if perhaps a better question would be (for #2): "Is there anything that bothers you or anyting that you're not comfortable with in your religion?" Or doubts. Something with more depth. Hmmm. I'll have to think more.

Well, gotta run. That's just one thing I've learned. Love ya.

Elder Bartholomew

P.S. Dan stopped by the Bronx last week on his way home from work and picked up a basket of items Daniel sent home with some non-LDS contacts of his who were so generous in helping these people they'd never met. He sent us 4 rolls of film to develop, some clothes he is not using, some candlestick holders carved by a convert to the Church (and which match our kitchen beautifully), some scriptures and books in the ancient Indian language and some coffee-table picture books about Guatemala, a hand-woven book bag for Laura, a very touching Father's Day Card for Dan, --I think that's it. Dan filled the emptied basket with presents from us. These good people refused a \$20 bill Dan tried to press in their hands for their trouble.

*Hi! I hope to get a Hallenbach out next week - at least for the month of Oct. - am so far behind here - it's sort of overwhelming - but it's great to be home.*

*It was wonderful to be "home" in Provo two weeks. Thank you for taking me in - just reaffirmed how blessed I am to be able to claim you as parents - you both gave me an incredible upbringing and continue to set an example in every way.*

*Mom - let me know the results of your tests. Thanks again for a great visit!*

*I love you! B*

*B*