

(A special message for an English Teacher Mom with a child on a foreign mission!" Didn't want you folks to miss these jewels!

Dear Mom and Dad,

Things are going OK. I am really learning a lot, but the road has been a little rough, lately. I'm really grateful for my mission because I can already see the problems I would have had to sort out if I hadn't come here and learned to deal with them on the mission.

Yesterday, Elder Sandoval and I went to visit a family we baptized that hasn't gone to church since. The father, Juan Ramon, was very drunk and wanted to fight, and the rest of the neighborhood was really cold, as well. I offered to shake hands with one kid, and he refused to shake hands and said, "I'm Catholic."

I've also been trying to be perfect too much, and the load was too heavy, and I'm afraid I gave way to tears one morning; and that's good, believe it or not, because I'm learning what my weaknesses are. Now that I'm learning what my weaknesses are, I can plan around them--setting high goals, but being able to relax, crack a smile, and accept myself when I make my mistakes.

I used to get angry so quickly and just blow up and then walk off, having vented away all the pressure; but I'm no longer that way. It takes a very long time for someone to anger me now, and I'm starting to see that in some ways I'm a lot more like Dad in that I can be a very quiet pressure-builder-upper, if I want to be (I feel that's good). Now, I just need to find the proper balance.

I'm looking for the way to be the very strictly obedient missionary who is also happy, smiling, and enthusiastic. I want to be spiritual without being pretentious. I want to be just and merciful. It isn't easy, but I'm making progress.

I'm praying that you'll find the job you need, Dad, but frankly, I've never been too worried about it. I wished it bothered me more, but I just don't feel worried. You are one of the wisest, most intelligent, and most thrifty men I know, and I don't think there's anything to worry about. That is the security which comes only from obedience to the laws of the gospel. You're OK, Dad.

Christmas without you two is a bummer, but I love you in more real ways, and there isn't a better place to be right now.

I learned about the \$350 deal with the mission, and it's inspired. We're all going to have to tighten our belts and discipline ourselves, but it's going to really work well. The Lord is putting the pieces into place, as we prepare ourselves. Some day the president of the Church is going to tell us that it's time to live the law of consecration, and it will be very exciting. ZION, HO!

Thank you for being the two best parents of all time. I love you! (Don't worry about Laura. She's talking and acting funny, but it's all a part of taking philosophy classes and coming face to face to the world for the first time, without Mom to tell you what to do.)

Love, Elder Bartholomew