

Introduction

A Little Help from a Friend

So you're thinking about going on a mission. Wonderful! There are few periods in your life when you can feel like all of your time and talent is being used to serve our Heavenly Father and build His kingdom. One of those times is while you are having and raising children, and another is while you are on a mission. In fact, serving a mission is a lot like having a baby. It is full of wonderful surprises and amazing challenges. It stretches you in ways you'd never have guessed, and it makes you into a new and better person. You and your children and your children's children will be eternally blessed because you made the choice to serve.

This book was written to be your big sister—a sister who has already gone on a senior mission and can give you useful advice. It's not supposed to be "everything there is to know about missions." It's supposed to be a resource for you that has practical answers to practical questions.

Sometimes you might be afraid to go on a mission because you don't know what to expect or how to handle all the new adventures a mission holds. I am here to help! Challenges can be resolved and fears can be calmed with a little help from a fellow senior sister.

Just as an experienced mother can help you learn how to survive pregnancy, nurse a baby, or calm a colicky child, I can help you fill out your colicky mission application papers, choose what clothes to take, deal with language and cultural challenges, and strengthen your marriage in stressful times.

Your mission will be one of the greatest experiences of your life, and if you have a little help from a friend, it can also be fun, exciting, and amazingly edifying. Just as having and raising a baby is not problem-free, neither is a mission, but with a little help, you can love the ride and grow from your problems instead of just enduring them.

So let's begin this adventure together! There are so many simple things you can do to enhance your mission experience. You just need to know where to start.

Missions and Me

Since I had always planned to serve a mission, as soon as I graduated from BYU in 1970, I submitted my application papers. I was called to serve in the Brazil Central Mission and entered the Language Training Mission, which preceded the current MTC, before I had actually turned twenty-one.

While in Brazil, I was called to be the zone leader over a zone of sister missionaries. As I served, I learned a great deal about myself and about missionary realities from dedicated and talented sister missionaries.

It was when I was sixty that the bishop called me and my husband, Bruce, in to visit with him. We expected to be asked to help in the nursery or to be given another calling, but instead, the bishop held up the most recent senior missionary bulletin and said, "When I received this bulletin in the mail, it seemed to have your names written on it."

We replied that we intended to serve a mission, but we were thinking of later, after we had retired and paid off our home. He said that his impression was that we should consider serving right away, and he asked us to go home and pray about it.

In shock, we began to consider the ramifications of quitting our jobs and leaving our home and family. But the more we discussed the possibility, the more we felt like it was something we should do. So we called the bishop and began the application process.

A few months later, we received our call to serve as the office mission couple for the Portugal Porto Mission. We loved serving in the office and interacting with all the missionaries. We loved helping the missionaries fix their broken plumbing and aching hearts. We loved working with our dear mission president and his wife. And we loved traveling all over northern Portugal.

But out of the blue, we received notice that our mission was being combined with the Portugal Lisbon Mission. Since they already had a mission couple, we were asked to serve as MLS missionaries on the southern coast of Portugal.

This was before the Church provided apartments for senior couples, we packed up our old apartment and moved to Faro, Portugal, where we found a wonderful, inexpensive apartment in the middle of a citrus orchard.

Oh, the adventures we had in Faro. As we searched to find unknown members whose names were on the branch rolls, we discovered old town Faro and enjoyed the beauties of the Portuguese Riviera. We gasped as our little car squeezed around blind corners on narrow, cobblestone streets. We laughed with the members as we taught dance classes. We cried when we had to leave the young men we had helped baptize. What sweet memories!

However, while serving this mission, I was surprised to see some couple missionaries struggling in ways they hadn't anticipated. Some struggled with health problems. Some felt left out and isolated when they could not speak the language their spouse had learned on a prior mission. Some found that the favorite recipes they brought would not work with the ingredients available in their mission country. After shedding many sympathetic tears with these

missionaries, I realized that many of their stresses and struggles could have been avoided if they had had a better idea of what to expect and how to prepare for their mission experience.

Only a few months after we had returned home from Portugal, we discovered that the Church needed attorneys to serve in area offices around the world. So we spoke with the Church's legal department, submitted our papers, and prepared to serve in the Brazil Area office. However, after we waited almost nine months for Brazilian visas, the legal office asked us to serve in the Africa Southeast Area office.

This mission was almost completely served in the area office in Johannesburg, South Africa. Bruce spent his days solving legal problems, and I had the amazing opportunity to work on the area website, collecting, editing, and publishing stories of the faithful African Saints. We also got to serve in a local ward supporting the young single adults.

We have rarely had the opportunity to use our talents in such meaningful ways. We stretched, we learned, we grew, and we knew that we were building the Lord's kingdom in ways we had never anticipated.

Will we serve another mission? We don't know. If the Lord calls again, we'll go where He wants us to go.

A Look Inside the Book

This book walks you through the process of going on a senior couple mission, starting with deciding to serve, moving through the application process, giving support for the major decisions you'll have to make, and exploring the initial adjustments you'll encounter as you begin to serve.

Chapter 1, "Should I Go?," discusses the benefits of serving a mission, including what Church leaders have said, and what opportunities are available for senior missionaries.

Chapter 2, "I'm Not Ready!," provides suggestions for preparing spiritually, financially, physically, and emotionally. We also share ideas for strengthening your marriage and improving your skills.

Chapter 3, "On Your Mark, Get Set, Apply!," gives step-by-step instructions on processing your mission application, including detailed information on what is included in the application process and what medical clearances are required.

Chapter 4, "Your Call Is Here—Now What?," discusses information about the specifics of your mission and how to get answers to your questions.

Chapter 5, “Money Matters,” gives you options and suggestions for dealing with your home, your taxes, and your bank while you’re away.

Chapter 6, “Health Concerns,” introduces discussions about health limitations, insurance, medical tests, medications, and immunizations.

Chapter 7, “Clothing and Appearance,” provides detailed information on clothing selection, accessories, cosmetics, and hair issues.

Chapter 8, “All Things Electrical and Electronic,” gives suggestions for phones, computers, e-books, electrical appliances, adaptors, DVDs, and music you can bring with you on your mission.

Chapter 9, “A Whole Mission in Two Suitcases—Are You Kidding?,” shares ideas for effective and efficient packing.

Chapter 10, “Getting There,” suggests ways to make travelling to your mission more comfortable.

Chapter 11, “The Missionary Training Center,” provides all the details you’ll want to know about the Missionary Training Center, from getting there to housing, expenses, and classes.

Chapter 12, “Mission Realities,” explains what to expect when you first arrive in your mission and what adjustments you’ll encounter. Chapter 13, “Culture Shock,” addresses unexpected differences you’ll notice in your new setting, such as traffic, laws, food, language, and schedules.

Chapter 14, “Marriage Adjustments,” suggests ways to keep your marriage healthy while serving together.

Chapter 15, “Family Concerns,” provides encouragement as you ponder leaving your children, grandchildren, and aging parents

Chapter 16, “Precious Experiences,” shares a few of my favorite memories that made our missions worth every sacrifice.

At the end of the book, Appendix A lists online resources you’ll use over and over, Appendix B lists countries and their electrical standards, and Appendix C provides illustrations of the different types of electrical plugs and outlets used throughout the world.

Let’s get started!