

Preparation and Enduring to the End

A missionary's last day in the field is a day full of emotion and tradition. Many missionaries in my mission wore their most worn out clothes on this day, maybe with the idea that these worn out clothes would demonstrate how hard they had worked and how ready they were to go home.

I learned an important lesson one day as I went to the mission office to pick up my last companion. I was waiting in the office for my companion to arrive and at the same time a group of missionaries that were finishing their missions were gathering in the office. I knew some of the missionaries and I was talking with them as I waited. Some of the missionaries came in some pretty old clothes. Some had holes in their pants and a couple probably needed haircuts.

That day, to everyone's surprise, Elder Jay Jensen of the Quorum of the Seventy and then the President of the South America North Area knocked on the door of the mission office. When he came in the first thing that he saw was the group of about 15 missionaries that were getting ready to go home. He was in the Presiding Bishop Office above, working on some business regarding securing land for the temple and he had come down to visit with President Larsen. I remember him saying, "President Larsen, what is going on here." President Larsen answered that the missionaries were going home and that they were just meeting in the office. Then President Jensen took a missionary by the hand and told him that he needed to put some better pants on and then he told another Elder that he should get a haircut before he went home.

I remember feeling relieved that I had a clean, ironed shirt on and that I had polished my shoes. I felt sorry for the Elders that President Jensen talked to. Many of us had gone our whole missions hoping for an opportunity to have "one on one" contact with a General Authority like Elder Jensen. I can only imagine how it must have felt, to have finally gotten that chance and then to have wasted it by earning a first hand rebuke.

I also thought that there is an interesting parallel with the Second Coming. No one expected Elder Jensen that day. Similarly it is prophesied that no one knows when Christ will return. I think that just as those missionaries wished they would have been ready and would have endured to the end, we will all want to be ready and endure to the end. Excuses that cite tradition and special circumstances will probably seem silly and ridiculous when that day comes. I think one of the keys is to live every day as if we might run into President Jensen or even Christ himself. If we live in this way we will have nothing to fear.