

Full Time Mission Message #11

Elder / Sister xxxxx,

This month we would like to share with you an interesting phenomenon that happens to all of us in our daily lives. It is the development of our countenance. When I was a genealogist I gave tours to non-members. They came to Salt Lake on my tours to do genealogy in the library there. At the end of the tour, just out of curiosity, I always asked them if there was anyone there who had never seen a missionary from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. To my amazement, out of the 100's of people who came on my tours I never had one person tell me they had never seen or met one of our missionaries. They I asked them the \$64,000 question. I asked them how they knew they were missionaries. In every case they said it was their countenance. They just knew when they saw them that they were missionaries. When you were set apart as a missionary you received a gift to be a representative of Jesus Christ and that became a part of your countenance as long as you are living the commandments and following the mission rules.

Alma 5:14

And now behold, I ask of you, my brethren of the church, have ye spiritually been born of God? Have ye received his image in your countenances? Have ye experienced this mighty change in your hearts?

Seeing A Person's Countenance

My father grew up in Wyoming in the early 1900's when they were still riding horses and rode in buggies. My dad was the youngest and had 2 older brothers. They were both very worldly in as far as the church goes. They had a very rough life and that forced them to be very tough and rouged men. The second of the sons (my dad's older brothers was named Anzel. The very first time I remember seeing Uncle Anzel was in an apartment where he lived in Salt Lake when I was about 7 or 8 years old. I have no idea where that apartment was but I would guess it was somewhere near 45th South in Salt Lake. It only had a kitchen a bed room and a front room. He owned a Phillips 66 gas station (correct me if I am wrong there). I doubt he owned it. Probably leased it. I remember seeing him

there and we have a picture floating around with him standing in front of it. I remember that is the first time I saw a television. It was that old round tube one. I remember sitting there with two sisters watching Hopalong Cassidy and some other cow boy shows. Uncle Anzel's wife's name was Joy. Watching TV back then was like a miracle and I remember Aunt Joy let us watch those two shows.

I heard lots of stories about Uncle Anzel from my dad on fishing trips when we went back to Wyoming fishing. I do not remember of Uncle Anzel ever going on any fishing trips with us. My dad just told us stories about him from when they were growing up there in the wilderness of Wyoming.

When Ike, Anzel and my dad Ammon were young men (about 1915 to 1925) one of the main forms of entertainment was dancing on the weekend at the local dance hall. My dad told us a story one time on a fishing trip about Uncle Anzel. He said uncle Anzel started drinking at a very young age. Anzel was a real mean person when he was drunk. So when he was a young man he would get drunk and then go to dances and start fights. Dad did not drink so after Anzel got drunk at the dance, dad, even though he was younger, would put his arms around Anzel so he could not fight and drag him home.

The last time I saw uncle Anzel he was in a bed in the front room of that little apartment. He was a chain smoker. He lit one cigarette right off the last one all day long. He never stopped smoking as long as he was awake. He was very sick because he had lung cancer and was dying. He was so sick that Aunt Joy had him out there in the front room where we could all help take care of him at night.

I did not know much about Aunt Joy. She was a very short. She was very kind to me and I remember her being a very good cook. She would sit in the kitchen of that little apartment and tell me stories. I really liked her. But I could tell she did not go to church. But I never saw her smoke. She may have drank coffee, I don't remember that but I know she did not smoke and did not swear like Uncle Anzel. After Anzel died I never saw her again. I did not even know where she lived. It was like she just sort of disappeared from our family.

Years later when I was going to the University of Utah I had a strange experience. My friend John Teusher and I were at the University Village where we lived. We were talking about light and how when people live righteously they start to give off light that you can see. John said he had never seen that and would like me to

show him someone who had it. I said that is easy, let's go down to the temple and I can show it to you.

We went down to the Salt Lake Temple and I told him to just sit down on a flower planter box there in front of the temple entrance. Sure enough in a few minutes here come an older couple out of the temple and down the street. You could see the light coming out of them like lightening. John was so fascinated that after they past our planter box he got up and went down the street two planter boxes and let them come past him again. Then he came up to the Temple gate again and waited for the next couple. When they came out and past him he went down the street two planter boxes and waited for them to pass him again so he could watch them and see the light coming out of them.

This second time I followed him down there to the other flower box and after they passed he said lets go back and wait for the next couple. As we started to get up, I saw this light around an older couple off to the left coming up the street. This older couple had little suitcases so it was obvious they were coming up the street to go to the temple. I told John to just wait a minute and this other couple would come up the street and pass us and we could watch them and see the light in their countenances.

We sat there for a minute until they came along. They were both very short and quite feeble so he was holding her arm and helping her walk along. The light coming out of them was so bright you could not miss it. As I watched them come closer and admired how kind he was to her and what light they both had. Then all of the sudden I realized it was my Aunt Joy. I did not even know she was still alive. I guess she must have remarried this other man who was active in the church and she became active and started to go to the temple with him. It was that same wonderful little Aunt Joy that I had loved sitting by in the kitchen and listening to her read me stories. She had a celestial light coming from her like I had seldom ever seen before. I did not stop her to talk to her. I don't know why. I regret not going over and talking to her now. I was afraid she would not remember me and would be frightened by a stranger approaching her on the street so I just watched in amazement as she went past. That was my Aunt Joy. I was so amazed to see that she again become again a second time like the man she married.

As missionaries we develop that countenance by how we live, how we work, by how we minister to others. And non-members can see it as they meet you every day. Elder Gene R. Cook promised us as missionaries that when we took someone's hand and looked them in the eye, as we bore our testimony to them, they would feel the same thing we felt. They may not know what that feeling is. They may not know what to do with it or how to act on it. But they will feel it. Every time your foot lands upon the door step of a home, that home is changed and the spirit of Christ enters in there with you while you are there. They can feel it. They can see it in your countenance. So let that help you have faith and bring to your heart boldness to go forth to proclaim Christ message of peace and salvation to every person you meet.

Hope you will have a wonderful month of success. Be your best and we will keep praying for you

Brother and Sister Vail

[Back To Index Page](#)