

Do We Really Know What We Have?

by Scott Anderson

We had an unexpected moment in the mission field. We knocked on a door and a lady said something to us we had never heard, "Come in." Now remember, I was a German missionary. This never happened to us; not even the members would say that to us. At this point suddenly this dear lady invited us in.

My companion said, "Do you know who we are?"

"You want to talk about religion, don't you?" she said.

"Yes, we do!" explained my companion.

"Oh, come in. I've been watching you walk around the neighborhood. I'm so excited to have you here. Please come into my study."

We went in and seated ourselves and she sat down behind the desk. She looked at us with a smile, then pointed to three Ph.D.'s hanging over her head. One in theology, the study of religion, one in philosophy, the study of ideas, and one in European history specializing in Christianity.

She then kind of rubbed her hands together and said, "Do you see this row of books here?" We looked at a well arranged row of books. She then said, "I wrote them all. I'm the theology professor at the University of Munich. I've been doing this for 41 years. I love to talk about religion. What would you like to discuss?"

My inspired companion said we'd like to talk about the Book of Mormon. She said, "I don't know anything about the Book of Mormon."

He said, "I know."

Twenty minutes later we walked out of the room. We had handed her a Book of Mormon and this trade off that we had been on was over.

I didn't see this lady again for another eight and a half weeks. When I saw her again it was in a small room filled with people as she was standing in the front dressed in white. This theology professor at the University of Munich was well known throughout Southern Germany. She stood up in front of this small congregation of people and said, "Before I'm baptized I'd like to tell you my feelings. In Amos chapter 8:11 it says there will be a famine of the word of God. I've been in that famine for 76 years. Why do you think I have three Ph.D.'s? I've been hungering for truth and have been unable to find it. Then eight and one-half weeks ago, two boys walked into my home. I want you to know these boys are very nice and wonderful young men, but they didn't convert me. They couldn't; they don't know enough."

And then she smiled and said, "But since the day they walked in my door I have read *The Book of Mormon*, *The Doctrine and Covenants*, *The Pearl of Great Price*, all of Talmage's great writings, *Evidence and Reconciliations* by John A. Widtsoe and 22 other volumes of Church doctrine." She then said something which I think is a challenge for every one of us here. She said, "I don't think you members know what you have."

In her quiet, powerful way, she said, "After those years of studying philosophy, I picked up *The Doctrine & Covenants* and read a few little verses that answered some of the greatest questions of Aristotle and Socrates! When I read those verses, I wept for four hours."

Then she said again, "I don't think you members know what you have. Don't you understand the world is in a famine? Don't you know we are starving for what you have? I am like a starving person being led to a feast. And over these eight and one-half weeks I have been able to feast in a way I have never known possible."

Her powerful message and her challenging question was then ended with her favorite scripture, "For don't you see, the truth can make you free?" She said, "These missionaries don't just carry membership in the church in their hands, they carry within their hand the power to make the

atonement of Jesus Christ of full force in my life. Today I'm going into the water and I'm going to make a covenant with Christ for the first time with proper authority. I've wanted to do this all my life.”

None of us will forget the day that she was baptized. When she was baptized, she got back out and before she received the Holy Ghost, she stood and said, “Now I would like to talk about the Holy Ghost for awhile.” She then gave us a wonderful talk about the gift of the Holy Ghost.

Later two young missionaries, both relatively new, (one had been out about five months, the other three weeks) accidentally knocked on the door of the seminary in Reagansburg. One hundred twenty-five wonderful men were studying to become priests inside. They didn't realize this was the door they had knocked on because it looked like any other door. They were invited in.

In somewhat of a panic, the man said, “I am sorry we just don't have time right now.” The two missionaries were relieved, but then he said, “Would you come back next Tuesday and spend two hours addressing all 125 of us and answer questions about your church?” They agreed that they would, and ran down the road screaming. They made a phone call to the mission president and cried for help. The mission president called us and said, “Do you think that dear lady that you have just brought in to the church would like to come help these two missionaries with this assignment?”

I called her to explain what was to happen, and she said, “More than I would like to eat, more than I would like to sleep, more than...”

I said, “Fine, you don't have to explain.”

We drove her to the seminary and as we went in, she grabbed the two missionaries that had originally been invited, put her arms around them and said, “You are wonderful, young men. Would each of you spend about two minutes bearing your testimony and then sit down and be quiet please?”

They were grateful for their assignment. They bore their testimony and then seated themselves. Then she got up and said, “For the next 30 minutes I would like to talk to you about historical apostasy.”

She knew every date and fact. She had a Ph.D. in this. She talked about everything that had been taken away from the great teachings the Savior had given, mostly organizational, in the first part of her talk. Then the next 45 minutes was doctrinal. She gave every point of doctrinal changes, when it happened and what had changed. By the time she was done, she looked at them and said, “In 1820 a boy walked into a grove of trees. He had been in a famine just like I have been. He knelt to pray, because he was hungry just like I have been. He saw God the Father and His Son. I know that is hard for you to believe that they could be two separate beings, but I know they are.”

She shared scriptures that showed that they are and then said, “I would like to talk about historical restoration of truth.” She then, point by point, date by date, from *The Doctrine and Covenants* put back the organizational structure of Christ's church.

The last 20 minutes of her talk were absolutely brilliant. She doctrinally put the truth back in place, point by point, principle by principle. When she finished this profound talk, she said, “I have been in a famine as talked about in Amos. You know that because last year I was here teaching you.”

For the first time, we realized that she was their theology professor. She continued, “Last year when I was teaching you, I told you that I was still in a famine. I have been led to a feast. I invite you to come.”

She finished with her testimony and sat down. What happened next was hard for me to understand. These 125 sincere, wonderful men stood and for the next 7 minutes gave a standing ovation. By the time four minutes had gone by I was crying. I remember standing and looking into their eyes and seeing the tears in their eyes, too. I wondered why they were applauding after the message she had given. I asked many of them later. They said, “To hear someone so unashamed of

the truth, to hear someone teaching with such power, to hear someone who finally has conviction.”
The truth is what can set us free. Do we really know what we have?