

YOMO!

YOU ONLY
MISSION ONCE



A GUIDE FOR

 Sister
Missionaries

HANNAH SHOAF HARDY

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CONTENTS

[Preface](#)

[Introduction: Why I Chose to Serve a Mission](#)

[1 The Worth of Souls](#)

[2 Be *You*](#)

[3 Dealing with Perfectionism](#)

[4 Joy](#)

[5 Having Fun on Your Mission](#)

[6 Trusting Heavenly Father](#)

[7 Divine Help](#)

[8 Serving before Flirting](#)

[9 Don't Give Up](#)

[10 The Power of Agency](#)

[11 Service Saves Souls](#)

[12 Working with Members](#)

[13 Always Strive to Follow the Spirit](#)

[14 All about Companions](#)

[15 Sources of Support](#)

[16 How to Prepare Physically, Mentally, Emotionally, Spiritually, and Socially](#)

[17 How to YOMO After Your Mission](#)

[18 Blessings from Serving](#)

[Appendix A: History of the Germany Berlin Mission and the Freiberg Temple](#)

[Appendix B: Glossary](#)

[Acknowledgments](#)

[About the Author](#)

1

THE WORTH OF SOULS

Don't let the world define your worth. Let God define it.

*"You are a beloved daughter of Heavenly Father, prepared to come to the earth at this particular time for a sacred and glorious purpose."*²

WE MATTER TO GOD

My mission didn't begin when I stepped off the plane and onto German soil. It started when I was set apart and sent to the missionary training center (MTC) in Preston, England. As a basic American girl, I was eager to hear British accents. The night before I had to leave to go to the MTC, my stomach was full of fluttering butterflies and jolts of excitement. I frantically raced between my bedroom upstairs and our family's piano room downstairs, where my suitcases were partially packed. It was about 9 p.m., and I still hadn't finished packing. I totally stressed out my poor dad. So I 10/10 don't recommend waiting until the last minute to pack!

The next morning, after my bags were packed and I managed to get some rest, I headed to the airport. I traveled on my first international flight with other American sisters, headed to England. The three of us sat together on the flight and developed a sisterly bond. Likely due to our collective nervousness, we found everything about the flight hilarious. Their friendship calmed my nerves about the next eighteen months of my life!

After a long but fun flight, we arrived at a British airport and drove to the England MTC. The MTC mission president and his wife greeted us, and we began our two-week missionary training. My fellow sisters-in-training were from Europe, and I loved hearing their accents.

The MTC in England was pleasant and small, with a spacious lawn and a delightful, well-trimmed garden. I enjoyed the opportunities to jog around the perfectly-trimmed bushes and the picturesque, budding flowers during exercise time. The Preston England Temple, right next to the MTC grounds, added to the beauty. It was a beacon of hope and a peaceful haven.

While my time in the MTC was full of spiritual teaching and learning, it was not without its challenges. I felt like a caged bird, dying to go outside the doors and explore the quaint British countryside. I was both eager and anxious for my departing flight to Berlin. I would ask myself, “Am I really doing this? Giving eighteen months of my life to the Lord?” Adjusting to the new missionary routine and schedule was difficult for me. I wondered, “Am I cut out for this? Am I good enough to be a missionary?” Doubt gnawed at me like a slowly creeping dementor, and waves of anxiety crashed around me, threatening to drown me in fear and panic.

During this time, my drowning didn’t go unnoticed by the Lord. The Spirit sent me reassurances, reminding me why I had accepted the call to serve. One afternoon, during my favorite part of the day besides dinner—exercise time—I was doing sit-ups in the small workout room when I looked up and saw a painting that instantly touched my heart. It showed two missionaries, elders, standing next to a young boy, all dressed in white at a beach. As I gazed at the artwork, I felt the Spirit strongly and said to myself, “*This* is why I’m going on a mission and can’t give up. I’m here to help another person find the joy of the gospel and feel Christ’s love.”

Another aid sent to comfort and strengthen me was my fellow sisters, both those who were Germany-bound like me and those sent to other places in Europe. There were only about twenty of us sisters at the MTC, and I felt blessed to have a more intimate missionary training experience than I probably would have experienced at a larger MTC. My sisters became my lifeline! During meal times, all of us would laugh and chat together. There was one sister who was always willing and eager to run with me. Also, when I was super stressed and almost burst into tears one night while praying, all the sisters huddled around me and comforted me. Their support and friendship made my stress more bearable and my MTC experience more fun.

Along with the sisters, another true disciple of Christ who lifted me up when I needed rescuing was the England MTC president. The president was very kind and observant. During one meeting with him, I was fighting to hold back the tears and anxiety rising within me like a tsunami when he asked, “How are you feeling about your mission?” I mumbled a response, and he reassured me about my service. It was not the words he shared that touched me but how he conveyed Christlike love and kindness. I felt the Spirit as he comforted me. Somehow, the president could tell I needed help, and he didn’t let me fall through the cracks. He exemplified how Christ is our Shepherd, ministering to the one (see John 10:14; 3 Nephi 17:9, 21). His support and watchful care were one of the main reasons I stayed on my mission.

The final reassurance I received was in the Preston England Temple. Before my group and I flew to Germany, we got to attend one endowment session. Near the end of the session, I fervently prayed. I pleaded for answers to my doubts and concerns. As I prayed, I felt the Holy Ghost reassure and comfort me about my service, with the Lord promising me that my mission would be of great value. Armed with that strong spiritual experience and the love and support of the MTC president and my fellow missionaries, I moved forward. The next day, my Germany-destined sisters and I boarded the plane that would take us on an eighteen-month adventure that would change our lives.

YOMO TRUTHS WHY THE WORTH OF SOULS MATTERS

I share these stories of comfort with you because these experiences taught me about Heavenly Father's love. He loves each of us, and you matter to Him! As President Russell M. Nelson taught in a worldwide devotional for young adults, "In all of eternity, no one will ever know you or care about you more than He does."¹⁰ He explained how we can ask for the Lord's help and how the Spirit and angels will come to our aid.

Sisters, the prophet's words are true: Heavenly Father loves you! On your mission and throughout your life, you can turn to Him, and He will help you. He wants you to succeed. At times when I struggled on my mission, Heavenly Father sent the Spirit and earthly angels to comfort me. You can pray to and rely on Him, and He will strengthen and uplift you just as He did for me.

Heavenly Father has wondrous plans for us, beyond our understanding. Moses 1:39 speaks about this truth, and one MTC teacher instructed me to diligently study this verse. In this scripture, the prophet Moses talked to God face to face, and God told Moses, "My work and glory . . . [is] to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man." Isn't it amazing that Heavenly Father has a divine vision for our lives? As missionaries, we can remember that it's *His* work and glory, and because of that, we'll have His help and direction.

We matter to God, and He sees the potential in us. Dr. Kristen L. Matthews taught at a BYU devotional, "We are His children. He loves us unconditionally, eternally, and unchangingly. Our worth is infinite because we are His daughters and sons."¹¹ Sisters, this is what the doctrine of the "worth of souls" is all about. We all equally matter to God because He is our Father. Remember your inherent worth as His daughter and that He has a plan for you. No matter how small you feel, you are destined for greatness.

In addition to our omnipotent Heavenly Father, our Savior, the architect of the universe, also considers us to be just as precious. Regarding the worth of souls, Doctrine and Covenants 18:10–11 teaches, "Remember the worth of souls is great in the sight of God; For, behold, the Lord your Redeemer suffered death in the flesh; wherefore he suffered the pain of all men, that all men might repent and come unto him."

I love these verses! It's empowering and reassuring to know that Jesus Christ, our Savior and Elder Brother, sees great worth in each of us, so much so that He atoned for all our sins. The Guide to the Scriptures explains that *atone* means "to suffer the penalty for an act of sin, removing the effects of sin from the repentant sinner and allowing him [or her] to be reconciled to God."¹² The Savior atoning for our sins means making us clean so that we can be reunited with our Heavenly Father. Whenever I worry too much about what the world thinks of me, it comforts me to remember that Christ sacrificed for us all, and He invites everyone to partake of His goodness and mercy. No one is excluded. Each of us has great worth because we are God's children, and His Son died for each of us.

Now, it can be easier to just read about the worth of souls than to apply it to our lives. President Nelson said that due to how frequently we learn about our identity as children of God, we may fail to miss the sacredness of that doctrine, but our identity truly matters because our understanding of who we are shapes every choice we face.¹³

While the Spirit has testified to me about the reality of our divine nature, I have been guilty of what President Nelson mentioned—of mindlessly reading or repeating the words about our true worth instead of actively internalizing and remembering that truth. It's easy to get caught up in how others define us or what the world thinks of us instead of making decisions while remembering we are children of our Heavenly Father. So how can we all internalize this great truth and believe in our divine worth more?

YOMO TIPS ON INTERNALIZING OUR DIVINE WORTH

- 1. Pray and ask to feel your Heavenly Father's love for you.** Sister Michelle D. Craig, in her talk "Eyes to See," encouraged us to pray for a spiritual witness of our divine identity and to ask God how He sees us individually.¹⁴ Acting on Sister Craig's suggestion, I was reassured of my divine worth through the Spirit, and I have felt Heavenly Father's love for me. Remembering my divine worth helps me be more confident, more loving toward others, and less worried about the world's perception of me. I know that Heavenly Father loves each of His daughters equally, with a depth of unconditional love that we do not fully comprehend. Follow Sister Craig's invitation, and ask God how He feels about you. I promise you will receive an answer!
- 2. Strive to focus on what God thinks of you, not what the world thinks of you.** This is not an easy thing to do, so know that you don't have to be perfect at it, but *strive* (or give an honest effort) to do so. While the world teaches us that we only matter if we're beautiful, wealthy, or score high on other mortal ideals, the gospel teaches that we matter to Heavenly Father no matter what. It's hard for me sometimes to ignore the voices of the media and other people's opinions, but the more we learn about God and His love for us, the happier and more at peace we will be with ourselves. Additionally, we can get to know Heavenly Father and His Son through scripture study and prayer, keeping us more connected to divine truths and more disconnected from worldly pressures.
- 3. Make your identity as a child of God your number one identity.** In his worldwide devotional for young adults, "Choices for Eternity," President Nelson discussed the power of labels and reminded us that while we can have multiple labels, one of the most important ones to remember and hold on to is "child of God." Follow the prophet's counsel and make "child of God" your most "important identifier."¹⁵ Although it can be challenging, as we strive to value the things of God more than the things of this world, we will more readily be able to trust in our divine worth. This can look like spending more time studying the scriptures and less time on social media, or attending the temple more often and serving others more. We will be blessed with greater peace, confidence, and love as we pursue our divine destinies as daughters of God and followers of Christ.

As you strive to learn about and internalize your worth as a child of God (and be patient with yourself since it's a lifelong process), you will be a happier and more confident missionary. The more you feel Heavenly Father's love, the more you will want

to share it with others. Remember, the doctrine of the worth of souls applies to everyone, including the people you teach, the missionaries and members you serve with, and even those who reject your message.

The Savior is our perfect example as we strive to recognize the worth of everyone around us. Jesus Christ looked past worldly labels and knew every individual's divine value. Sister Craig said, "We can follow the example of Jesus and see individuals—their needs, their faith, their struggle, and who they can become."¹⁶ As missionaries, we can strive to be like Christ and look past appearances and see others as children of God with endless worth and potential. We can believe in people's capacity to change. As people go through trials, we can treat them with love and compassion instead of judgment. We can teach anyone willing to listen, regardless of their present-day barriers to accepting the gospel. We can also serve and love others and pray for charity to see others through Heavenly Father's eyes. As Elder Dale G. Renlund taught, "I now realize that in the Church, to effectively serve others we must see them through a parent's eyes, through Heavenly Father's eyes. Only then can we begin to comprehend the true worth of a soul."¹⁷

Learning of your divine worth and striving to see people through Heavenly Father's eyes will help you be a YOMO missionary. I was able to serve more confidently and genuinely when I remembered how much God loved me and when I felt His love for the people around me. Conversely, the more I focused on myself and my flaws, the more inadequate and awkward I felt around people. But as I strove to have the Spirit with me, prayed for charity, and focused on others, I felt God's love for myself and His children in greater abundance. It was empowering and helped me YOMO.

YOMO STORY: CINDERELLA AND THE WORTH OF SOULS

I met an extraordinary sister in Chemnitz, Germany. Her name was Anisha, and she was a young American woman living in Germany. Anisha had gorgeous auburn hair, large, beautiful eyes, and a contagious personality that made you feel happier just being in her presence. During my time in Chemnitz, we became friends, and she shared with me an awesome email she had sent to her sister, who was serving a mission at the time. Using Disney's live-action movie *Cinderella*, she taught her sister about worth, envy, and service. I want to share Anisha's "Comparison is the Thief of Joy." (Many attribute this phrase to Theodore Roosevelt.)¹⁸ She compares looking for validation from others to the Cinderella story, describing how these ideas about self-worth relate to missionary work:

Ella's stepmother lives a life of misery, never ceasing to compare herself and her daughters to others. This jealousy eventually leads her to cruelty. After Ella's father dies, she loses the money that had helped her stay on top. Her self-worth is tied up in [being better than others], so of course it hurts.

Ella's stepsisters were raised to only know their value by exterior circumstances. Isn't that the most vulnerable situation ever? When you know that you could become as good as dead if your exterior circumstances change? What a scary world to live in.

The stepmothers and stepsisters see Ella's innate joy and don't know how to have it. They want to crush it because they see themselves as dim in comparison even after they spend their whole lives trying to look bright.

Ella knows that the exterior circumstances are clearly temporary, and she doesn't tie up her worth in them in the least. She is grateful and seeks to go see Kit [the Prince], who she knows will be her friend regardless of her attire because she came to know him at her most scraggly time. She knows he likes her for her courage and kindness, not her looks.

Be a fairy godmother to your companions and investigators. This doesn't mean changing their external situations—it means helping them know that the true love of God cares nothing about exterior circumstances and everything about just giving your best. Ella had her mom's old-fashioned dress and knew it wasn't like her sisters' dresses, but it was enough to go to the ball. God loves us for who we are, at our worst and most scraggly. He sends fairy godmothers to help us remember that we have to keep believing and not give up!

I'm convinced you and your companions will come upon many Ellas who have fallen on their knees and are ready to give up as she did—who stop believing. You come to them and ask for milk (figuratively speaking), and then help them see their worth.

Similarly, you will come across one or two stepmothers who feel they have no self-worth beyond what they can show the world. Love [them] too, and teach them God's forgiveness.

I *love* Anisha's Cinderella-missionary story. It resonates with me because for starters, I love fairy tales and princesses *way* too much, plus I struggle with jealousy. Also, I've always imagined myself as the princess in the story, but sometimes I have a stepmother-like tendency to base my worth on external things, like beauty, productivity, and intellect. Anisha's words stick with me because she shows us how to ease the ache of envy and insecurity by applying the balm of divine love. Let us be like Ella and remember who we are: daughters of God with immutable, inherent, and eternal worth. Let us also be fairy godmothers and treat the people we meet with charity and compassion. Be an Ella and a fairy godmother on your mission, and I know you will YOMO and change lives!

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. How does knowing your worth as a child of God help you avoid envy and replace jealousy with love?
2. It can be easy to get caught up in the world's lies and believe, like the stepmother, that our worth comes from external circumstances. How can we change this way of thinking? How can we be like Ella and remember that our worth is inherent?
3. Sometimes we just need someone to remind us of our worth. How can you be a "fairy godmother" and help remind the people around you about their true worth? Or help remind the people you teach about their true worth?

STUDY SESSION: SCRIPTURES AND TALKS I LOVE ABOUT OUR DIVINE WORTH

- Russell M. Nelson, “Choices for Eternity” (worldwide devotional for young adults, May 2022), Gospel Library.
- Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Your Happily Ever After,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, May 2010, 124–27.
- Michelle D. Craig, “Eyes to See,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2020, 15–17.
- Dale G. Renlund, “Through God’s Eyes,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2015, 93–94.
- Dieter F. Uchtdorf, “Our True Identity” (video), Gospel Library.
- “Young Women Theme,” Gospel Library.
- Doctrine and Covenants 18:10–16; 1 Samuel 16:7; 2 Nephi 26:33

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9. “Welcome to Personal Progress,” *Young Women Personal Progress* (2009), 1, [ChurchofJesusChrist.org](https://www.ChurchofJesusChrist.org).
 10. Russell M. Nelson, “Choices for Eternity” (worldwide devotional for young adults, May 15, 2022), Gospel Library.
 11. Kristin L. Matthews, “The Worth of Souls is Great” (Brigham Young University devotional, Aug. 6, 2013), 2, speeches.byu.edu.
 12. Guide to the Scriptures, “Atone, Atonement,” Gospel Library.
 13. Russell M. Nelson, “Choices for Eternity.”
 14. Michelle D. Craig, “Eyes to See,” *Ensign*, November 2020, 15–17.
 15. Russell M. Nelson, “Choices for Eternity.”
 16. Michelle D. Craig, “Eyes to See,” 15.
 17. Dale G. Renlund, “Through God’s Eyes,” *Ensign* or *Liahona*, Nov. 2015, 94.
 18. “Theodore Roosevelt | Quotes | Quotable Quote,” Goodreads, accessed Nov. 15, 2023. <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/6471614-comparison-is-the-thief-of-joy>.

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