

## Out of My Hands

Dasha was the most prepared, most enthusiastic investigator I ever taught. She loved the Book of Mormon. She attended church, institute, and family home evening faithfully. And several months after her beautiful baptism, she made the days-long journey to the temple to perform baptisms for the dead. So, after all that progress and faith, the inevitable hardships were devastating.

The day Dasha returned from the temple, she discovered her parents were separating. My new companion and I comforted her in what little ways we could, but Dasha began to struggle spiritually. Doubts surfaced. She returned to past habits and tried to justify them to herself and to us. Within a few weeks after her temple experience, she was going through the motions. Her bright smile disappeared. A frightening darkness was replacing the light in her eyes. The Spirit seemed to have all but left her.

My companion and I had no idea what to do. And I was close to finishing my mission—I didn't have much time to help Dasha get that light back.

Dasha's friend Alina, a member of the ward, approached us to discuss Dasha's regression. While we deliberated, I realized that one of us might need to talk to her directly about her behavior. The more I thought about it that day, the more it sounded like what needed to happen. I had never called someone to repentance so directly, but as a missionary, I understood that I had a responsibility to do it. My companion agreed, and we decided that I should be the one to talk with Dasha, since I had known her the longest.

I made a plan: at church, while my companion was on exchanges with another ward member in Relief Society and I was with Dasha in Young Women classes, I would pull Dasha aside and softly but firmly warn her that she needed to make better decisions. I wasn't looking forward to the task, but I was determined.

When I knelt down on Saturday night, I brought the plan before the Lord, explaining the details and asked for His help. In response, a powerful calmness flowed through me. It swept away my anxiety about Dasha.

A clear, gentle voice spoke in my mind. "Don't worry about it. The ward will take care of her. Your job from now on is just to be her friend."

Relieved and hopeful, I obeyed. The next day, I said nothing to Dasha about repentance. In the weeks before I went home, and I made sure that she felt as much love as possible from me. My companion did the same, having received a similar revelation about the situation.

Dasha seemed to get better, gradually. As her family life settled down again, she started to smile more, to interact with the ward members again, and to ask more questions in classes and lessons. When it was time for me to go home, though, she still hadn't completely regained the light she'd had before. She was still struggling.

On my final Preparation Day, my companion and I stepped onto the same metro car as Alina. (In a city of over twelve million, that was no coincidence.) We chatted, and she brought up Dasha's slow but positive progress. I told Alina about the revelation I'd received.

She nodded, smiling. "I got the same answer, except the other way around. I was told I needed to help the ward take care of Dasha."

I blinked back tears as my heart swelled with gratitude. My friend was in the ward's kind hands, and her loving Heavenly Father was watching over her as well. She was going to be okay.

Now, years later, Dasha is a returned missionary. She is active in the ward, and thanks to her example, her sister is investigating the Church. Dasha's light burns brighter than ever.