

## Episode 11

### Why I Believe

#### PETER AND CATHERINE VAN DER HORST

NARRATOR: The views and opinions expressed here are those of the guests and are not the official position of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

[BEGIN MUSIC]

MALE VOICE: We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.

MALE VOICE: We believe the Bible to be the Word of God...

FEMALE VOICE: We believe in being honest, true, chaste, benevolent, virtuous, and in doing good to all men...

MALE VOICE: We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved...

MALE VOICE: We also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God.

FEMALE VOICE: We may say that we follow the admonition of Paul—We believe all things, we hope all things, we have endured many things...

(Music)

RICK STARR: Welcome to Why I Believe on the Mormon Channel. I'm Rick Starr. Today we have visiting with us Elder Peter Van der Horst and Cathy Van der Horst who are service missionaries here at the Church headquarters in Salt Lake City, Utah, and today we're going to talk with them about their conversion story and some of their thoughts on the gospel and the Church. Thank you so much for being with us today.

ELDER PETER VAN DER HORST: Thank you for inviting us.

SISTER CATHY VAN DER HORST: Thank you.

RICK STARR: It's good to have you here. Let's begin with talking about your upbringing. I know, Brother Van der Horst, you were raised in Holland.

ELDER PETER VAN DER HORST: I was born in Holland; I lived there for about eleven years and my dad always had an adventurous spirit in him and he wanted something a little bit better for his family and so he decided that we were gonna immigrate to the United States and at that time, there was a restriction based on the number of people that could immigrate, there was a quota system, and we couldn't get in so he did the next best thing and we ended up in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada.

RICK STARR: Uh-huh (laughing). So you're Canadian then?

ELDER PETER VAN DER HORST: I'm a Canadian citizen; I actually just received my US citizenship about a year ago so I'm a dual citizen.

RICK STARR: Oh. Congratulations.

ELDER PETER VAN DER HORST: Thank you.

RICK STARR: What was your religious upbringing?

ELDER PETER VAN DER HORST: Oh, staunch Catholic. My mother and father were practicing Catholics and went to church every Sunday, went to a nursery and kindergarten and grade school and high school all run by Catholics—

RICK STARR: Catholic schools.

ELDER PETER VAN DER HORST: Yeah, nuns and priests; went to a Catholic high school, went to a Catholic college. Yes, very much so, practicing Catholics; like I said, went to Church every Sunday and instilled in me a, you know, a religious background which I appreciated. I think it gave me a guideline, a direction in which I needed to steer my life, and I think that had some definite pluses in my life, and I think it set me along a path which would eventually lead to the Church, to the true Church.

RICK STARR: Uh-huh. Great. Sister Van der Horst, how about you? What was your upbringing?

SISTER CATHY VAN DER HORST: Oh, I was born in the state of Wisconsin, along the shores of Lake Michigan, and my grandparents immigrated from Ireland in the late 1800s and another set of grandparents immigrated from the Netherlands in the early 1900s and they also were Catholic all their lives—as my mother would say, for more generations than anyone can count—and I also attended Catholic schools, went to mass every morning and really developed an appreciation for the power of prayer and that God loves us and that He knows us and cares about us. So it was a good, good upbringing. We started in Wisconsin and then my dad went to work in the aerospace industry in the Seattle, Washington area and then down into Southern California to work for the aerospace industries there.

RICK STARR: You both mentioned some ways in which being raised Catholic possibly prepared you for the Church, the Mormon Church. Were there any specific conflicts that you came upon, being raised Catholic and then being introduced to the Mormon Church, and how did you overcome those?

ELDER PETER VAN DER HORST: Oh, I think it was just the opposite, at least from my perspective. When I first learned about the Mormon Church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints,

I saw the similarities and I didn't dwell on the differences at the time, and I think that had a very positive effect on me in that I did believe in Jesus Christ and as a Savior and when I found out a little bit more about the Mormons when we were first introduced, I saw some similarities there which I embraced, and that led me on the path to know more and to learn about the Book of Mormon and to get that testimony or start building that testimony the more I learned.

RICK STARR: To add to the truth you already had.

ELDER PETER VAN DER HORST: That is correct.

SISTER CATHY VAN DER HORST: I went inactive in the Catholic Church when I was around 17 but I still believed the Catholic Church to be the one true church, and then later at the Los Angeles visitors' center, when I first learned what the Mormons believed—I had no idea what they believed, all I knew is they were pioneers, that's all I knew about the Mormons, and so when I learned that Joseph Smith had knelt in a grove and prayed to God and God had answered his prayers, it seemed so true and real to me, I believed it. I said, "This is something that I can build upon and grow with and go forward with." It was a relief. We had been searching for a religion and we just thought, "Well, just something that would be easy enough for us to live with," but we gained a great surprise when we found the restored gospel of Jesus Christ.

RICK STARR: That's wonderful. We'll come back to a little bit more about the story of how you joined the Church, but out of interest, what was your family's reaction to you joining the LDS Church?

ELDER PETER VAN DER HORST: Well, my dad just kind of clamped down and, you know, went into silence and didn't really support us, didn't support me in that, about the same thing with my mother. They just kind of set it aside so to speak; they didn't really act negatively towards me, they didn't disown me, they just perhaps maybe distanced themselves a little bit more from me and didn't—at least from my perspective—didn't involve themselves into my life any more than they had to. But as time went on, that eased and they saw the positive benefit it had on my life and impact and especially after they met Cathy and some of our children and they saw the impact and realized that they, you know, they could be a little more supportive than they had been. But, you know, keep in mind, these are people from the old country, and it's generations upon generations of Catholics, it's very difficult to embrace a change from the norm, they are in a certain comfort zone. It's very difficult to break away from that unless you're personally involved in that and you personally receive that testimony and that enlightenment that, hey, here is the true Church and this is our path that we need to take in order to return to Him one day.

RICK STARR: And that's invaluable to anybody who makes the effort.

ELDER PETER VAN DER HORST: Exactly. And it takes an effort. It definitely takes an effort.

RICK STARR: Yeah. Sister Van der Horst.

SISTER CATHY VAN DER HORST: My father, when he learned, he said, "Well, if that's what you wanna do, you go ahead and do" it and my mother was just horrified that I would change what was

traditionally in our family generation upon generation, and they didn't disown me but they weren't really receptive and they were more mocking and they made fun of our new beliefs and, "Oh, you can't do this and you can't do that, why are you going to church again on Sunday?" and that type of thing, so I had to decide for myself that I needed to be strong, and if this is what I believed, I needed to go forward and then work at finding answers and finding ways that would help them to come to accept our new beliefs.

RICK STARR: Over time, did their opinion change of that?

SISTER CATHY VAN DER HORST: I would love to say it did but it hasn't...

RICK STARR: Oh, I see.

SISTER CATHY VAN DER HORST: And my mother still shakes her head at the things I do and the things that we believe in, but she's okay, I mean it's okay with her that I do it and she has seen some benefits but it's nothing that she wants any part of.

ELDER PETER VAN DER HORST: But she loves the Mormon Tabernacle Choir.

RICK STARR: (laughing)

SISTER CATHY VAN DER HORST: This is true, she does.

RICK STARR: That's a good influence, isn't it?

SISTER CATHY VAN DER HORST: It is. It's a very positive influence, and she did join us the past weekend for General Conference as we watched in our home, and hopefully, you know, her heart will be softened.

RICK STARR: So does she live here near you now?

SISTER CATHY VAN DER HORST: She does live near us now.

RICK STARR: Wonderful.

SISTER CATHY VAN DER HORST: She does, she moved here last fall, about six months ago.

RICK STARR: That is great.

ELDER PETER VAN DER HORST: I might add she is 95 years old.

RICK STARR: Oh, that's (laughing) something we all hope for.

ELDER PETER VAN DER HORST: She's still going strong.

RICK STARR: That's great.

For any of you who are just joining us, this is Why I Believe on the Mormon Channel. My name is Rick Starr and today, we're visiting with Elder Peter Van der Horst and his wife Cathy Van der Horst who are missionaries here at the Church headquarters, and we'll talk a little bit about that in a few minutes. Right now, can you describe your introduction to the Church? How did that come about?

ELDER PETER VAN DER HORST: Well, Sister Van der Horst was the secretary to the controller of the company that we both worked at. His name was Ken Hickman, and he was a Mormon bishop, and we—or at least I—was very impressed with his mannerisms; the way he talked to us, the way he dealt with us, his family, and we got to know him quite well and he is the one who introduced the Church to us. At that time, we were kind of going together and we were thinking about getting married and since we had a very religious background, we wanted to have a, you know, religion back in our lives and we inquired a little bit about him and he was not very pushy, he was just, you know, informative, letting us know a little bit about the beliefs, and we said, “Okay, that’s nice,” and—

RICK STARR: Where were you at this point?

ELDER PETER VAN DER HORST: We lived in California. Both of us lived in California, and we were looking to get married and we found out that because he was a bishop, he could marry us, and we kind of looked at each other and said, “Why don’t we have Ken marry us?” “Oh, what a great idea.”

SISTER CATHY VAN DER HORST: Well, I think Peter is leaving out a little part that’s interesting.

RICK STARR: Okay. Go ahead.

SISTER CATHY VAN DER HORST: We both went to meet with a parish priest and talked to him about being married and it did not go well at all.

ELDER PETER VAN DER HORST: No. I was very taken aback at what the priest said. I didn’t feel the Spirit there and I looked at Cathy and I said, “There has to be something else. There has to be something else out there that we can embrace and bring into our family.” And that’s when the subject of her boss came up, and we started inquiring and one thing led to another and he did marry us, in fact, in her parents’ home, before we were members, by the way, and I can still remember that ceremony was so touching and so sweet, and his words of counsel and inspiration, and I remember tears were coming down my eyes, how the Spirit was there in our getting together and being married.

SISTER CATHY VAN DER HORST: And then a few months later, he said, “Well, what did you think of the visitors’ center at the Los Angeles Temple?” and we said, “We haven’t been.” And so he said, “Well, let’s go.” So we all went together and it was a remarkable experience. It was very surprising to learn what The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is all about and what their beliefs are, and he purchased a Book of Mormon for us and then we went home with it and usually, the office is very, very busy, but there was a slow period there that wasn’t expected and so Ken Hickman and I both started reading the Book of Mormon at the same time and we would read and talk about it and discuss it and for me, that personally is what converted me to the Church is the Book of Mormon. As I read it, I didn’t understand everything I read but I knew I had found something, and I couldn’t describe what that something was but I wanted it to be a part of my life and I just had the feeling that if I let go of that something, I wouldn’t find the happiness that I had had previously, that I needed this new something in order to grow in happiness and to grow in joy and it’s been a wonderful, wonderful blessing in our lives.

RICK STARR: So you went to the visitors’ center...

SISTER CATHY VAN DER HORST: We did.

RICK STARR: And that was your first introduction...

SISTER CATHY VAN DER HORST: First introduction.

RICK STARR: To the Mormon Church. But the Book of Mormon had a special place in your conversion.

SISTER CATHY VAN DER HORST: It certainly did. I took Moroni's challenge and found a quiet time and I prayed about it and I received that testimony, that warmth and joy and loving feeling from our Heavenly Father that, yes, this book is true, and while I didn't understand everything about the Church, and I didn't understand all the doctrine and the principles, I knew I had found something and that I wanted to proceed forward with this and that I was convinced no one was deluding me into doing something I would regret later, that this is something that would benefit my life and the life of our family.

RICK STARR: Thank you. Brother—Elder Van der Horst, when you were first introduced to the Church and went to the visitors' center, was there anything in particular that impressed you about the Church?

ELDER CATHY VAN DER HORST: I think that the Joseph Smith story, I think, impressed me about, here is this young man who earnestly wanted to know which religion to join and how he knelt in the grove and received that confirmation, that direction that steered, you know, the rest of his life, and that impressed me, and in discussing the Book of Mormon with Cathy, we wanted to know more and more and talking and meeting with Ken Hickman, we received that knowledge, and again, that led to wanting to know more and more and at one time, Ken suggested that perhaps maybe the missionaries could stop by and we kind of said, "Yes, that would be fine," and really never gave it a second thought until about, I think it was maybe three or four months later. I had had a busy day at the office and Cathy was pregnant at the time as I recall, and I was kind of tired, I had just gotten home and we were gonna fix dinner and just kind of maybe watch some TV and there was a knock on the door and here stood this senior missionary couple, Elder and Sister Westover from Idaho Falls, and they were very nice and pleasant, and I looked at them and I was just about ready to throw them out the door because they hadn't made an appointment and now there they come knocking at my door without an appointment. But the Spirit guided us to let them in and we sat down and chatted and I think about maybe three or four hours later after they went through about three or four discussions, we—I remember, I think I said the closing prayer, and what a wonderful evening we had with them. The Spirit was in full attendance and it had such an impact on my life and the way I looked at the Church and I wanted to know more and was just hungry and starving for information and this true knowledge which we felt all around us and sure enough, we set up a number of other appointments and lessons, and that led to our baptism.

RICK STARR: Now you had mentioned earlier that Sister Van der Horst was pregnant at the time that you first started taking the discussions. Did the birth of your first baby have any effect on you deciding to join the Church, and how?

SISTER CATHY VAN DER HORST: It certainly did have an effect on us. We wanted to have a strong moral religious compass for our children to have, just as we had had in our lives. Even though I

had left it in my teenage years, it was still a vital part of me, and while there was a period of years where I didn't pray, prayer was still a part of my life and I knew when I did pray that our Heavenly Father was listening and guiding us and since we had this falling away with the Catholic Church, we were having troubles reconciling our feelings and beliefs to the parish priest's feelings and beliefs that we went looking, and my thought was, "If we can find something that's fairly easy to live with, this will be wonderful and then we'll raise our children and it'll be good for them" and what we found when we went to the visitors' center was a complete surprise to us and totally unexpected and a wonderful blessing in our lives. I've often thanked the Lord for sending a senior couple to teach us the missionary lessons. When they came, we were grateful that they were there, and Leland and Deola Westover spent 18 months in our area at their own expense. Southern California—Los Angeles—is an expensive place to live and I believe they taught us the lessons and one other young man and they spent 18 months. I think there's a lot of people who would say, "Is that really worth their investment?" I'm here to say, I'm so grateful for their investment, for the time and sacrifice they spent and I wanna witness to them some day—they've passed along now—how grateful we are and how they have affected our lives, our five children, our grandchildren's lives, it's just remarkable. It was really worth it to me for them to come.

RICK STARR: And now you're following their examples; you're serving a mission yourselves.

SISTER CATHY VAN DER HORST: Yes, we are. We've chosen a different course. We chose a full two-year mission at the Church Office Building. We're working in the Physical Facilities Finance Department and we're not out proselytizing but we're making a difference, I think; we are helping and we're doing good. We're working with people who are all the best of the best of the Church members. They are wonderful people. They are very patient and guiding and supporting. It's been a great experience. One of the things I've enjoyed about working here in Salt Lake City is the comradery of other senior missionaries. We have prayer meetings every morning, we have activities; it's just wonderful to share the Spirit of the Lord with others who feel that same Spirit and are here to serve and do whatever it is that needs doing.

RICK STARR: That's just great.

ELDER PETER VAN DER HORST: We made the promise to each other right after our baptism that we were going to serve a mission and we knew we couldn't do it at the time, and all throughout our lives in bringing up our children and sending two of our sons off to a mission, we always looked at each other and said, "We're planning to go on a mission. We're going to go on a mission. And it wasn't until about maybe two or three months after I finally retired that we put in our papers. We wanted to do it right away. We didn't wanna wait any longer. We wanted to serve a mission to thank our Heavenly Father and all those who impacted us in our lives. What fantastic input and impact they had in our lives. We look at our children and see how strong they are in the gospel. All of them have attended BYU and graduated from BYU. We're gonna have the honor later on this month to be able to be with our son who is getting his doctorate and our second son who is getting his master's and our youngest daughter who is getting her bachelor's, all three of them walking together and graduating at BYU.

RICK STARR: Well, you raised your family in California and now it appears they're all here.

SISTER CATHY VAN DER HORST: Yes, they are (laughing).

ELDER PETER VAN DER HORST: That's why we followed them when we found out that none of them were planning to come back to California, so when we put in our mission papers, we put in our mission papers in California, put our home on the market and surprisingly, I think the Lord wanted us on a mission right away because we sold our home in seven days, and were able to find a home here in Springville, so that set us along the path and got us onto a mission within four, five months of me retiring, and a dream come true. A goal that we started right after our baptism and to see that reality and to be here, to feel the strength of those who work for the Church, to work on temples and special projects—our love is with the temple. We attend on a weekly basis. We are greatly impacted by doing the work for those who have gone before us and Sister Van der Horst has done a tremendous amount of work on genealogy and extracting the names that we can do from our own genealogy in the temple. We've always been able to do that whenever we go and we are just so excited to be able to further that work.

RICK STARR: That's great.

SISTER CATHY VAN DER HORST: Genealogy has been a great part of my life in joining the Church. Since we don't have the support of our earthly families here—it's been more than 30 years since our baptism and none of our extended family has chosen to join the Church—, I have felt the influence of our ancestors as we have found their names and they have opened doors for us to help us find their records. In the temple, we have some very sacred experience where our ancestors have testified to us that, yes, we are on the right path and this is the right way to go and this is what we need to do. When I first started, it was very hard and it's slow to gather names and to find the records and to have your ancestors take those names to the temple and I would sit in the family history center and think, "Oh, I wish the Lord would put some of my ancestors in a book, I wish the Lord would help me find this person I've been searching for for years and I just wish whenever we go to the temple, it could be with one of our ancestors" and in the Lord's own time, He has answered every one of those prayers so that we have an abundance of ancestors that we take to the temple each and every week and it's a great blessing in our life, a great strength to us to receive their testimony in our hearts when we are in the temple for them.

RICK STARR: How has doing that work also affected your own five children?

SISTER CATHY VAN DER HORST: It has affected them because they also love to go to the temple. They enjoy being in the temple. It was just a little over a month ago that our youngest daughter was sealed in the Mount Timpanogos Temple with her eternal companion and all five of our children and all five of their spouses were there in the sealing room, and I felt the sealing room was much more populated with the many ancestors who were there rejoicing in their posterity and their acceptance of the gospel and their living the gospel in these very challenging times. All our children are active and they love the Lord and they love the gospel and they're willing to serve and do whatever they need to do.

RICK STARR: Thank you.

If you're just joining us, this is Why I Believe on the Mormon Channel. I'm Rick Starr, and today we're visiting with Elder Peter Van der Horst and his wife, Cathy Van der Horst, who are serving a two-year mission here at the Church headquarters, and we're talking about their conversion story. I'd like to go back a little bit and talk about the influence of a member on you in your introduction to the gospel. Maybe I could read a quote from the previous prophet and could get your reaction to it.

SISTER CATHY VAN DER HORST: Okay.

RICK STARR: Because you were introduced to the Church by a member before you were introduced to the lessons by the missionaries. President Gordon B. Hinckley said, "So many of us look upon missionary work as simply tracting. Everyone who is familiar with this work knows there is a better way. That way is through the members of the Church. Whenever there is a member who introduces an investigator, there is an immediate support system. The member bears testimony of the truth of the work. He is anxious for the happiness of his investigator friend. He becomes excited as that friend makes progress in learning the gospel." Talk about your reaction to what President Hinckley said and your introduction to the Church by a member.

SISTER CATHY VAN DER HORST: I believe this is true. Ken Hickman rejoiced with us as we learned in the gospel and was just amazed that the Spirit of the Lord just rested upon us and brought us step by step and line by line and precept upon precept into activity into the Church, and we often thank him and he said, "Don't thank me." He said, "Thank our Heavenly Father, for it was His Spirit who did all the work." I had probably worked for Brother Hickman about five years before we actually went to the visitors' center and began the missionary discussions, and every once in a while he would just ask me, "Are you interested in this? Would you like to learn more about that?" And I would politely say, "No, thank you," but he wasn't pushy, but he just always let me know that if I had any questions or any needs, he was there to help me, always polite and gracious and a wonderful man to work for. It was exceptional.

ELDER PETER VAN DER HORST: I was always impressed with his mannerisms and the way he treated people, how he reacted, you know, in negative situations. We were both working for a construction company and he just impacted me positively, just the way that he handled himself and the way he talked to his wife and the way his children were behaving, and it was just an ideal family that I wanted to emulate and it was just an awesome experience just being associated with him and learning more about him and what made him tick and what drove the way that he handled himself. It was just definitely a positive, non-intrusive impact that he had in my life.

SISTER CATHY VAN DER HORST: And then after our baptism, our ward family was essential in carrying us through because there is a whole other culture in our Church, in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and there's so much to learn and so many things we don't understand, and people were very patient and very supporting and very outgoing and including us in everything, and it was hard to join a volunteer Church. It was hard to go outside yourself and take responsibility for something you felt so unqualified to do that and there were a lot of tears but I'd say, "It's so overwhelming, I can't do this," and

they'd say, "Don't worry, we'll help you, you'll be okay, we'll walk you through this, we'll help you go forward" and it is as I say, it's line upon line and precept upon precept, here a little and there a little, it's a very growing process and the ward family is essential, especially when you're leaving your own family members behind in this new adventure. The ward family is great and wonderful. They taught us how to be supporting, how to be forgiving, how to be loving, they are the ones who kept us strong in the gospel.

ELDER PETER VAN DER HORST: And we noticed that especially because right after we got married, I had a job opportunity in Colorado. The project was being done by the company in a different state and they asked me if I wanted to pack up and move there and we kind of looked at each other and said, "Well, you know, we just started our family and we wanna start off fresh, let's do it."

RICK STARR: So you made the move.

ELDER PETER VAN DER HORST: So we made the move and immediately fell in love with the new ward, and the members were so friendly and we thought, "Wow, this is great, no matter where you are, the Church is established in the same way, organized in this fashion." The members of the ward embraced us and it was just a fantastic experience and even though we were there for a couple of years, we then relocated back to California to 1000 Oaks and again felt the same way and we moved into the best ward in the Church.

RICK STARR: (Laughing) As they say.

ELDER PETER VAN DER HORST: As they say, and the best stake in the Church, and as it turned out, it was the same stake in which Ken Hickman lived and, in fact, an interesting side story: I had always looked up to this man. I always wanted to emulate him. And when I got called to the high council and I sat in that first chair, I looked around the table and there was Ken Hickman sitting in that last chair. He was the senior high councilor, and as time went on, I moved myself around the table until I sat next to him and I kind of looked at him and I said, "I'm sorry, it took a while, but I'm finally here." So that was a great experience to actually sit next to the man who had such a positive influence in my life and the life of my wife and our children.

SISTER CATHY VAN DER HORST: While we were in Colorado, we had set a goal when we joined that we could go to the temple after we had been members for a year, and they helped us to accomplish that goal, and at that time, the temple district for the area was the Manti Temple, so it was an all-night bus ride to go to the temple with the members of the ward and of the stake, and Peter had a special experience the following morning when we arrived.

ELDER PETER VAN DER HORST: Yeah, keep in mind, we'd been travelling all night long in a bus, laying in the aisle, trying to get some sleep, arriving in Manti early in the morning, and I remember coming out of the hotel. I looked up and saw the Manti Temple on the hill, and there was this angelic scene—all these people dressed in white walking up to the hill towards the temple—and I will never forget that picture. The Spirit that I felt and that scene of seeing these volunteers going up to and serving in the temple that early in the morning, it was kind of misty and just beautiful. I thought "I have arrived in heaven." And to be able to be sealed in the temple, to have our only daughter at that time brought in and sealed to us

for all time and eternity, what an experience. There are very few of those life-impacting experiences that will stay with you forever and have a positive impact in the way that you live and the way that you react and the way that a positive impact it has in your life.

RICK STARR: That's great. You had mentioned earlier, Sister Van der Horst, that when you joined the Church, there were a lot of new things that you didn't understand, even the terminology can be a bit confusing at times.

SISTER CATHY VAN DER HORST: Absolutely.

RICK STARR: And that your ward family was very instrumental in helping you feel welcome and helping you through that. What were some of the first callings that you had in the Church?

ELDER PETER VAN DER HORST: I'm kind of chuckling because my first calling in the Church was activities committee chairman, and I had no experience in that. Perhaps I could have maybe put forth a little bit more effort than I did at the time but I still learned a lot and was able to at least make a contribution at whatever level I could at the time that led me to, you know, a secretary in the elders quorum and then ultimately in a presidency and in a bishopric and finally on a high council, so it's interesting how you learn and grow after you join the Church. There was no lightning strike, there was no, you know, hallelujah, here comes Elder Van der Horst, or Brother Van der Horst. It was a slow process for me. I learned to gain my testimony and strengthen it as I learned more and studied more and read the Book of Mormon and understood the Book of Mormon. And that's what I enjoyed about the Church. It forced me to go through a learning process and to gain a testimony and being able to take that within me and have that have a positive result in my actions and reactions and how I dealt with people and how I learned to serve and help others and give them that same opportunity that I received, that positive impact by being a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

RICK STARR: What was your first calling, Sister Van der Horst?

SISTER CATHY VAN DER HORST: My first calling was as an assistant Junior Sunday School leader and the Junior Sunday School leader was Chieko Okasaki who was later part of the general Relief Society board as a counselor.

RICK STARR: That's great.

SISTER CATHY VAN DER HORST: I had no idea what an amazing person she was. I enjoyed working with her. I had a very difficult time; I was very shy and reticent, I didn't want to stand up in front of people and talk, I think our first sacrament meeting talk lasted maybe a minute and a half...

RICK STARR: (laughing)

SISTER CATHY VAN DER HORST: And I felt good that I was able to get that far and do that much but it was wonderful to have a loving, guiding spirit who'd take me under her arm and guide me into the Church and build up my confidence that I could do whatever it was that needed doing. I really enjoyed Relief Society. It was a life saver for me. It taught me how to be a mother, taught me gospel doctrine, it taught me about the world around me, it was just an

absolutely amazing experience and I am so grateful that it has been a part of my life, and before we came on our mission, I had an opportunity to be our ward Relief Society president and I just felt surrounded by love and surrounded by wonderful women who still loved me and forgave me when I micromanaged and got too fussy about things and they were just very patient and loving with me and I think that's what we all want in life is to be supported and to be needed and to be loved and to have a wonderful family around us, and we feel the same here with our ward in Utah. They are loving and wonderful and very supporting of us.

RICK STARR: You know, as I look at your conversion and starting out with the callings and things, it just, it's so true, the concept of line upon line, precept upon precept and when you join the Church, you don't just learn by studying, but you learn by doing. You jump right in and you do and serve and help and...

SISTER CATHY VAN DER HORST: It's a leap of faith.

RICK STARR: Yes.

SISTER CATHY VAN DER HORST: Even though the calling may seem so simple to someone else, to a new member, it's a big leap of faith to jump in and do whatever it is that they're asked to do; and going on a mission is another leap of faith, even though we had planned for it so long, it got really scary right before it was time to do it but we just, I just took a deep breath and we jumped in and it's been an amazing experience.

RICK STARR: There you are. Yes.

ELDER PETER VAN DER HORST: I was not a public speaker and I was deathly afraid of having to stand in front of people and talk and I remember the first time I was asked to give an opening prayer at sacrament meeting and I got to think, "I can't do this, I can't do this." And then I realized that, "Well, everyone's gonna be bowing their head anyway, I'll just write it on a piece of, on a card, and when everybody bows, I'll just go ahead and I'll just read it."

RICK STARR: (laughing)

ELDER PETER VAN DER HORST: So that's how I started, and the end of that story is, I was called to the high council, and of course, I had to give my monthly talk, and the first one was quite difficult, but as time went on, it got easier and easier, and twenty years later—I served on the high council for twenty years...

RICK STARR: Oh, wow.

ELDER PETER VAN DER HORST: I was well experienced.

RICK STARR: You must have done something right.

ELDER PETER VAN DER HORST: I think so. Either that or I had to keep doing it until I got it right.

RICK STARR: (laughing) If you're just joining us, you're listening to Why I Believe on the Mormon Channel. I'm Rick Starr and today we're visiting with Elder Peter Van der Horst and his wife Cathy Van der Horst who are missionaries here at Church headquarters, and we've been

talking about their conversion story. You know, earlier we talked about some of the things that impressed you when you were first introduced to the Church. Were there any particular barriers or challenges that you had when you were considering joining the Church?

ELDER PETER VAN DER HORST: Tithing.

RICK STARR: Tithing.

ELDER PETER VAN DER HORST: Scared me to death.

RICK STARR: Uh-huh.

ELDER PETER VAN DER HORST: I had an accounting background, so when I first learned about tithing, I could think of about 20 different ways to recalculate what the amount of tithing that I should be paying rather than an increase. I thought of, you know, your net income, and of course, you make all the deductions just like you would your tax return, and somehow, whenever I presented this to Sister Van der Horst, there was some resistance there, and I hadn't really learned that process yet of tithing and that's one of the challenges when you're a convert. If you were born into the Church, you gradually get exposure to it, but when you're a convert, you know, there is a line drawn, and all of a sudden, you know, get out your check and start paying, and that was very difficult for me. And it wasn't until someone mentioned to me that, or asked me the question, "Well, do you want net blessings or gross blessings?" And I thought to myself, "Well, you know, I think I'd want the gross blessings," and surely we made the decision to do the right thing as we were instructed by our prophet, and immediately the blessings started pouring out. We were in the midst of a move to Colorado and everything just fell into place there. We were able to sell our home at a very good profit. We were able to find a new home in Colorado and then our return back to finding a good spot in 1000 Oaks to raise our family. One thing after another was just—the blessings just started pouring in and pouring in, and I have a firm testimony of the blessings of tithing. And I have seen the results of it and that if you allow yourself or give yourself the opportunity to not only pay your tithing but a generous fast offering and a building fund and humanitarian fund and all of the opportunities that the Church provides, to give you an opportunity to share the blessings that you have received. What a feeling I get when those things happen to you and impact you, and the reason we are here serving a mission and being able to do so right after I retired and to make us financially stable and to give us that opportunity is a direct result of us making that commitment early on after our conversion to pay an honest tithe.

RICK STARR: Thank you. What a wonderful testimony. Now you had mentioned that you got some resistance from your wife on that concern that you had. So was that, am I taking that that Sister Van der Horst was setting you straight a little bit on that principle?

ELDER PETER VAN DER HORST: Yes. I will gladly admit that.

RICK STARR: (laughing) Thank goodness for our wives.

SISTER CATHY VAN DER HORST: So early in our church membership, I think it may have been a visiting teacher who said, "Just always remember that you put the Lord first, and that you joined because the doctrines are true. You didn't join because of the people and the Church."

She said, “Sometimes, someone’s gonna hurt your feelings and you’re gonna be tempted to be upset at the Church.” She said, “Always remember the doctrines are true and just keep coming to church and let the Lord handle all the other little problems that may come into your life.” I believe strongly in the power of the priesthood, in the blessings of the priesthood, and Elder Van der Horst has given me many blessings throughout my life, but Bishop Hickman gave me a blessing after I was baptized when I was confirmed as a member and in it I thought there were admonitions that I needed to learn how to pray, I needed to learn how to fast, I needed to learn how to listen to the Lord, and so maybe a month after my baptism, that’s when I truly became converted, when I took an afternoon when I was all alone and started praying out loud very quietly, even though I was alone, I just started praying out loud so that I can concentrate on my prayer, and I thanked the Lord for everything I could think of and asked for His blessings. I still felt I hadn’t dug deep enough and so I tried harder and prayed longer and tried to think of everything I could and then I started crying and I started crying very loudly, and the Spirit of the Lord touched me and I grew close to the Lord and I realized how much He does love us individually and how much He wants us to come unto Him and have our prayers heard and answered that he can pour blessings upon our head, and I—a lot of growth in the gospel on the afternoon I took to pray to our Heavenly Father and to try not to live shallowly and not live day to day but to have a focus on His kingdom and coming back to be home with Him again in heaven where I want all our family to be and all our friends and all the people who have touched our lives so bountifully, and I’m grateful that I made that opportunity and took the time to pray and come close to the Lord. I’m also very grateful for patriarchal blessings. It’s been over 30 years and I just find something new in it very often. The first thing that touched my heart when I had my patriarchal blessing as the patriarch told me that the Lord is mindful of me and it’s just such a simple phrase but it touched my heart every time I read it and every time I saw it that I knew the Lord cared for me, and I continue to study my patriarchal blessing and try to follow the precepts and guidelines that are in it. It’s a wonderful tool as a member of the Church to have a blessing directly from our Heavenly Father personalized for you.

RICK STARR: Your own personal roadmap so to speak through life.

SISTER CATHY VAN DER HORST: Yes, it has been and will continue to be.

RICK STARR: Yes. Thank you so much. We just have a few minutes before we wrap up and if you wouldn’t mind sharing a little bit about what you’re doing on your mission here at Church headquarters and then we can wrap up with your testimonies.

ELDER PETER VAN DER HORST: Well, when I was planning to retire, I looked at that time the blue sheets and I noticed that there was an opportunity in Church Finance dealing with temples and special projects and even though my background was in construction management, my earlier background because of my Dad’s experience as a CPA, I wanted to be a CPA but I took a right turn somewhere and ended up in construction, and I thought, well, gee, with my kind of finance background and construction, I might be able to add a contribution, and when we put in our papers, there was some verbiage that we put in there that kind of indicated where we would like to serve; and sure enough, we did get a call and ended up at the Physical Facilities Department Construction Finance working on temples and special projects, and for the last couple of years, I’ve had the opportunity of working

alongside the accountants in the construction of the Oquirrh Mountain Temple, the Draper Temple, Vancouver, Cebu, the Kiev and Gila Valley and Rome now and Philadelphia, and what a fantastic experience that I've had working alongside Church employees, helping them and advising them because of my background in construction, I can give them a little bit different perspective, and I've done a number of studies and made presentations in which I can hopefully have a positive impact in how processes or procedures perhaps can be improved from a different perspective and that's been so gratifying and I've received very positive feedback and I think the Lord wanted me to serve in this particular position at this particular time so that I can be of benefit to this particular department, and it's been extremely gratifying. It's strengthened my testimony. It has been such a pleasure to work right alongside Sister Van der Horst and to have her sit next to me, and I have been able to help her with the computer programs and things of that nature, which I was very familiar with and was able to contribute also while we were serving, I was kind of the local computer expert, and not only did I help Sister Van der Horst but everyone on the floor with that ability and I'm so grateful that we've had that opportunity not only to work together but to be a contributing factor to the growth of the Church and the construction of temples. The temples are close to both of our hearts and we strengthen our testimony each day we serve and it's such a rewarding experience. I'm glad we did it, I'm glad we did it at the time that we did and didn't wait. If I can provide any advice to any couple who is thinking of going on a mission, don't wait. The opportunities are here now, your talents are needed, it's an awesome experience. The blessings are a hundredfold.

**RICK STARR:** You know, it's really neat to see that first of all, you've taken all those years of professional development, and now you have the opportunity to donate those to the Lord, but also just as neat, I think, is the fact that years ago, when you were first investigating the Church, you both worked together in the same company and now here you are again.

**SISTER CATHY VAN DER HORST:** This is true. This is true. This is wonderful. It was very overwhelming to me to think of going back to work in an office again after being a homemaker for over 30 years, and I thought, "Everything's changed and I'm not gonna know what to do" but everyone is supporting and helpful and they're there and this is the Lord's work. He inspires you through the difficult tasks, and when you're asked to do something and you just have this wonder of "How am I gonna do that?", the Lord helps you and it comes to you and the employees are very supportive. They are grateful for anything you do for them. They are very thankful and very happy to have you there.

**RICK STARR:** That's neat. Can we conclude today's program by hearing your testimony? Sister Van der Horst, if you would begin, and then Brother Van der Horst.

**SISTER CATHY VAN DER HORST:** I am grateful that our Heavenly Father has given me the life experiences to bring a testimony to know that He lives, that He knows us personally and that He loves us. I am grateful that our Savior Jesus Christ came and lived perfectly and died and suffered for our sins that we may return to our heavenly home which is where we really want to be. I'm grateful that He has loved me through every challenge and helped me and has forgiven me for all the many mistakes that I have made throughout my life. I'm grateful that as the years have grown, I have taken the time to become close to the scriptures and appreciate the work and the love and the blessings that the prophet Joseph

Smith brings into our lives. I am grateful for the choices he made consistently to do what the Lord asked to do and to do it now. I am grateful for his example, for his steadiness in the gospel and I'm grateful that the Lord has brought temples to the earth again that we may be sealed as a couple and as a family for all time and eternity that the blessings of the Lord rest upon us now and in the future. I am grateful for living prophets and apostles who lead and guide this Church. I am grateful for the power of prayer, for the blessings it brings and I leave this in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

RICK STARR: Thank you.

ELDER PETER VAN DER HORST: I, too, have a testimony of the gospel. All I have to do is look at how Sister Van der Horst and I first met and how we were able to be influenced by a member of the Church to inquire more so that we, too, could gain a testimony, so that we, too, can create an eternal family with children in the covenant. We're grateful that we had that opportunity. We're so grateful that we brought into this world five lovely children who express through their actions and through their testimonies the beauty of the gospel. The advantage of being a convert is to be able to compare life before and after conversion. I am so grateful for the opportunity to have gained a testimony of the gospel, to have a testimony of the Book of Mormon, to have an impact, me and my dear sweet wife, impact on our family and the result that we have created—five beautiful children, soon to be ten grandchildren. This is what we have lived for. The gospel is true. We know for certainty that we are here for a purpose, that we can express our appreciation to our Heavenly Father through prayer. I have a testimony of the truthfulness of the gospel, of Jesus Christ and His atoning sacrifice for us. How difficult it must have been for Him to do that, and I'm grateful for the impact that has had on my life. I'm so grateful for the Prophet Joseph Smith. We've had the opportunity to visit the historical sites and feel of the blessing that is there. We visited the sacred grove and we feel his spirit there. I know that God lives. I know that we have a true prophet here upon this earth. I know that the Book of Mormon is true and I have a testimony of tithing. I'm so grateful that I was able to grasp that concept so early on so that I could participate in the benefits and blessings that we have received. And I have a testimony of being able to serve a mission, a senior mission, to be able to provide service and express thanks for the blessings that we have so richly received throughout the years and I leave this testimony with you in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

RICK STARR: Thank you. Thank you so much, Elder and Sister Van der Horst for being with us today on Why I Believe.

ELDER PETER VAN DER HORST: Thank you very much for inviting us.

SISTER CATHY VAN DER HORST: Thank you for the opportunity and experience.

RICK STARR: You've been listening to Why I Believe on the Mormon Channel. For more information on this program and other programming available on the Mormon Channel, please go to [radio.lds.org](http://radio.lds.org). Thanks for listening.

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