

## Episode 16

### Why I Believe

#### JOHN AND DIANE ENSLEN

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. My name is Rick Starr, and today our guests are John and Diane Enslin from Alabama, and we're so glad to have you with us here today. Thank you for being here.

DIANE ENSLEN: Thank you for asking us.

RICK STARR: We'd like to begin today by talking a little bit about you and your upbringing. You're both from the south. Now let's talk about where, how you were brought up. Sister Enslin.

DIANE ENSLEN: I was brought up an only child in Hartwell, Georgia. Goodly parents, both Baptist, raised a Baptist and lived there for 18 years until I went to college at Clemson University.

RICK STARR: Which is where you met, right?

DIANE ENSLEN: Yes.

RICK STARR: Brother Enslin, talk about yours.

JOHN ENSLEN: I'm a 7<sup>th</sup> generation Wetumpka Alabamian. That's in Elmore County, it's about 15 miles—at least my home was about 15 miles—from the state capitol in Montgomery. I

was born there—I was actually born in Montgomery in a hospital, St. Margaret's Hospital, on November 12, 1946, but shortly thereafter, my parents took me back to my home town of Wetumpka. I'm a—I think I said I'm a 7<sup>th</sup> generation Wetumpkan. I graduated from high school there and was active in the, very active in the Baptist church growing up, I was in Royal Ambassadors and attended Vacation Bible School and Sunday worship services and Training Union and went to summer camp at Shocco Springs and sang in the Primary choir, and when I was 12 years old, I won the State Bible Sword Drill Contest so that was basically my background up to the time of high school.

RICK STARR: So you were both raised active Baptists—

DIANE ENSLEN: That's right [CHUCKLING].

RICK STARR: In the south. How did you—how were you introduced to the LDS Church?

DIANE ENSLEN: We met a couple who were LDS while my husband was serving active duty 1972 in Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana. There was this couple there; they let us know quickly that they were LDS and we watched them and we knew there was something different about them. They set a very good example. We—I really didn't know anything about what a Mormon was or who a Mormon was.

RICK STARR: Had you ever heard of Mormons before?

DIANE ENSLEN: No. Not really. Not really. But they picked our interest and we knew there was something different. And we wanted to know what it was.

RICK STARR: Was it in their example or—?

DIANE ENSLEN: Yes, in their example.

JOHN ENSLEN: I had gone all the way through grammar school, junior high school, high school, four years of college at Clemson University, three years of law school at the University of Alabama and had never met a Mormon. That may be difficult for some people to realize but in the south, that would not be uncommon, the south east. The only references to the Church that I had known growing up is sometime around the seventh grade in our history book; it mentioned about Mormon pioneers going west. It also mentioned about a young man who claimed to see God but the way it was written in the schoolbook, it made him out to be somewhat of a lunatic, frankly. I didn't even associate the Mormon Tabernacle Choir with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I had heard the choir sing on some television Christmas specials, but other than those two things, I had no association whatsoever with Mormonism.

RICK STARR: Hm. So after you met this couple, what was the process of your conversion?

DIANE ENSLEN: Well, independent of each other, I asked the sister—the wife—to tell me just a little bit about her religion and she just lit up like a Christmas tree.

RICK STARR: [LAUGHTER] Imagine that.

DIANE ENSLEN: And she said, “When can I come over?” [CHUCKLING] And she came and she gave me the first discussion, which I didn’t realize at the time but she was a wonderful missionary. And I can remember that I was so moved. The Spirit moved me then—and I didn’t even really know what the Holy Spirit was—to tears. When she finished her discussion, I was in tears.

JOHN ENSLEN: This couple—their name is Lee and Eileen Barney from the state of Oregon. Lee had served a mission in Japan. Both he and I were first lieutenants together in a class of approximately forty lieutenants—first lieutenants—who were attending adjutant general school at Fort Benjamin Harrison. We lived in the same apartment complex so we rode with one another to work every day for a three-month period, and so we would have conversations on our way to and from work. I remember Lee was always interested in what I believed about certain things. He asked me, for instance, how did I feel about the women’s liberation movement that was starting to get some momentum that summer of 1972. He also asked me how I felt about Native Americans. There was an Indian uprising in Wounded Knee, South Dakota that summer, and I shared with him my beliefs on those various things and we shared with one another our beliefs on those various things and they were—we had a great deal in common. By the time our three months were over, Lee and I were good friends. We had worked at our physical training together. He was a long-distance runner; I had played football and basketball at Clemson University and was interested in athletic things as was he. And so at the end of our three months, he as a good friend gave me a copy of the Book of Mormon and asked me if he sent a couple of young men to talk to us about the Church, would we entertain them in our home, and he being the good friend that he was, I assured him that I would be willing to do that.

RICK STARR: Did you know at this time that your wife had talked to his wife about the Church?

JOHN ENSLEN: I did not. And Diane didn’t share that with me at that time.

DIANE ENSLEN: Or if I did, you forgot. [LAUGHTER]

JOHN ENSLEN: Or if she did, I forgot.

DIANE ENSLEN: [LAUGHTER] It was a long time ago.

JOHN ENSLEN: We got back to—well, October 1972 is a milestone in our life because I completed my military obligation. I received the results from the state bar exam, allowing me to begin to practice law, and I hung out my shingles, as they say, in that month. Lee Barney called me that month after we’d gotten back home and said, “Have the missionaries been by to see you?” And we said, “No.” A similar phone call took place in November and then December and then January, with the same results of no missionaries having come.

RICK STARR: And you had moved back to Alabama to start your business, right?

JOHN ENSLEN: Yeah, we’re in Wetumpka, Alabama. And the nearest mission headquarters and the mission having jurisdiction over our area is hundreds of miles away in another state—Tallahassee, Florida—so I’m sure that probably had something to do with getting missionaries to Wetumpka, Alabama to visit us. But in February of 1973, on the very day

that our second child was born, the missionaries came to Wetumpka, Alabama and I met them for the first time.

RICK STARR: Did they come just to come to your house to come meet with you?

JOHN ENSLEN: They came to seek out us and I had stopped by my law office to pick up the mail and they happened to have come while I was there. Diane was in the hospital with the newborn. My secretary buzzed me twice, which was the high-tech method in 1973 of letting me know that I had some clients in the waiting room, and I walked out to the waiting room and there were two young men in white shirts and ties and I believed at the time that they were insurance salesmen. [CHUCKLING] They looked exactly like insurance salesmen to me. But they stood up and one of them said, "I'm Elder Walk." And the other one said, "I'm Elder Humphreys." And I said, "Well, that's strange, you both have the same first name." [LAUGHTER] And then they said, "Lee Barney sent us." And then I knew that they were missionaries from the Mormon Church. And I told them—and my wife and I still are not sure about this—I think I told them to wait a couple of weeks to come to the house. Sister Enslin says I told them to wait one week to come to the house, [CHUCKLING] but we invited them to the home, to our home, to have a meal with us—

DIANE ENSLEN: For dinner. [LAUGHTER]

RICK STARR: And they readily accepted, I'm sure.

JOHN ENSLEN: They accepted and showed up promptly on time [LAUGHTER] and that commenced the teaching process.

RICK STARR: Now you had had a Book of Mormon for a number of months up to that point. Had you looked at the Book of Mormon or done any research on the Mormons?

DIANE ENSLEN: I had looked at the book and tried to read it but couldn't get very far. Of course, I was having a baby, too—

RICK STARR: Oh, sure.

DIANE ENSLEN: And had another little one at home and just had not gone very far in it but just, I remember telling my wonderful father, my wonderful Baptist father in Georgia about meeting this couple and how wonderful they were and showed him the book that they had shared with us.

JOHN ENSLEN: I read the portion in the front dealing with the three witnesses and the eight witnesses. And the impression that came over me after I read it was that somebody sure is trying real hard to prove this book is true. It looks to me like the proof of the pudding is in the eating and the proof of the writing would be in the reading of it. Now that's the thought that came to my mind but then the very opposite thing happened. I threw the book in the shelf and didn't explore it any further. I was more interested in establishing my law practice, and when I wasn't doing that, I was playing golf or doing what other activities I was interested in as a 26-year-old young man.

RICK STARR: With a young family.

For any of you who are just joining us, this is Why I Believe on the Mormon Channel. Today our guests are John and Diane Enslin who are converts to the Church and also currently serving a mission in the, here in Salt Lake, in the Church Office Building. And we'll talk about that in a few minutes but you just described how the missionaries were sent to you by your friend, Brother Barney who you attended school with, in the military with. Talk about the process of your conversion after the missionaries started meeting with you.

DIANE ENSLEN: Well, we probably would not have let them in had we not known Lee and Eileen. I would like to think that we would have, but we welcomed them with open arms because of our friendship with Lee and Eileen. And as soon as they came into our home and began to teach us, there was a warm, sweet spirit there every time they came. They came in February, we started the discussions the end of February, and we were baptized in—

JOHN ENSLEN: On May the 5<sup>th</sup>.

DIANE ENSLEN: In May. May. I couldn't remember April or May.

JOHN ENSLEN: May 5, 1973. But it was not all sweetness in the teaching [CHUCKLING] process.

DIANE ENSLEN: Not with him, but it was with me. [LAUGHING]

RICK STARR: What were the challenges, the obstacles?

JOHN ENSLEN: Well, I felt, of course, I had no intentions of joining the Mormon Church when they first began to teach us. I allowed them in because I'd promised a friend that I would allow them in. The first several discussions were more in the nature of theological debate because I knew the Bible, I felt, pretty well. And the discussions back then, or the missionary lessons, were a little different than they are now. They were more direct back then. They used the flannel-board discussion and it was more like "Your Church is wrong because A, B, C, D," was the impression that I had so I naturally defended that. And I reached a point to where I had a little fear that what they were teaching me might be right. And then the next stage of progression was my doing what they asked me to do the very first time they met with me, which was to study it and pray about it. So that's when I really began to make some spiritual progress was when I began to actually read it and pray about it. And so originally, like Sister Enslin says, it was the good example of the Barney family that aroused sufficient curiosity and commitment to them to entertain the missionaries but it was the missionaries' patience and unconditional love for us that softened me to the point where I could be teachable. Diane was more teachable than me from the beginning. But once I became teachable and I started studying the doctrines, it was the, it was the doctrines of Christ in their purity that intellectually satisfied me and answered questions I had that had bothered me for my entire adult life. For instance, what happens to those who die who were never taught or heard the name of Jesus Christ, for instance. But in the end, it was the Holy Ghost that converted both of us, that gave us the courage to take a gigantic step toward membership in the Church.

RICK STARR: So you were baptized May 5, 1973 and both raised Baptist, active Baptists. What was the reaction of your families when you joined the Church?

DIANE ENSLEN: Well, mine were, were not there, they were in Georgia, so I really don't know exactly what they had to say among themselves without, you know, out of my ear range, but they always, to me, were supportive, especially my father. My mother did have a friend who was of another religion speak to me one time when I came to visit about my planning on joining this Church. And she was, I could tell, wanted to be negative, but kept that in check. [CHUCKLING] So I think there was a little consternation on my mother's part but not on my father's.

JOHN ENSLEN: We were living in Wetumpka, Alabama and my parents were next door and I had two sisters, one very much younger who didn't take an active part in trying to persuade us one way or the other. Now to the credit of my father, who is now deceased, by the way, he said to me, "John, you do what you think is right." And that was a wonderful thing for him to say. And so I never felt any negative pressure from him. My mother had our preacher come to talk to us and that was a pleasant experience but he could not turn us from the things that we had learned that were true. My sister, the older of my two sisters, and she's a year younger than me, but she's the older of my two sisters, she sent me a couple of anti-Mormon books. I did read parts of both of them but by that time, I had studied and read and prayed enough that the information in the two anti-Mormon books was actually laughable to me. And so they did not turn me. My mother's next proposition to both of us was the one thing that had a chance of perhaps causing us to procrastinate our baptism. My mother said to me, "John, if you won't get baptized just yet, I will sit down and listen to all the lessons that these two young boys have taught you." Now there is nothing that I would have desired more at that point and time than for her and my parents and my sisters to hear the same thing I had heard and have an opportunity to either accept or reject the restored gospel, but I knew immediately by the time she finished propositioning me with that proposal that I should not procrastinate my baptism and that this was a ploy from the dark side, [CHUCKLING] and I should go ahead and get baptized. And we did. I thanked my mother, and to her everlasting credit, she came to our baptism. Now that was—at the time we were baptized, I want to throw in that in the intervening years, their appreciation for the Church has just greatly increased, both of my parents have. We have their respect and we get along wonderfully as family members. They are all still Baptist; I mean, my mother is a Baptist and I'm sure she'll want to have her funeral in the Baptist church just like my father had his in the Baptist church a year ago, but—and my sisters probably the same. Nevertheless, we continue to try to set a good example and when teaching opportunities arise, we take advantage of them.

RICK STARR: That's wonderful. You know, you'd mentioned that the elders came just to see you. So how many members were there in the Deep South in the early 70's to welcome you into the Church?

JOHN ENSLEN: Well, there were no members in our city at all. Sister Enslin and I were the first two people to be baptized into the Church in Wetumpka. Out in the county there were a couple of members—two senior couples, one couple that had moved into the county and another couple that had been baptized in the country. All of us—and we got to know them fairly soon—we had to travel to the south side of Montgomery, about 25 miles away, to a small branch of the Church to attend. And we did that. Back then you went for Priesthood, then you came back and later went back for Sunday School and then you

came back and later went back in the evening for sacrament meeting. So that was a 150-mile round trip for us each Sunday, which we'd faithfully done until we got our own branch in Wetumpka, Alabama.

DIANE ENSLEN: That was about 18 months after we joined. We were able to form a branch in Wetumpka.

RICK STARR: Oh, really? That soon after you were baptized. Oh, that's great. What was your experience like as new members of the Church there in that small branch and what were your first callings, for example?

DIANE ENSLEN: Oh, gee, I don't even remember my first calling. In a small branch, you know, you have three or four [LAUGHTER]. I've always played the piano. They put me at the piano from the very first, very first Sunday in Montgomery, Alabama, I was at the piano. Let's see, what was your question again? [LAUGHTER]

RICK STARR: Describe your experience as a new member.

DIANE ENSLEN: Well, yeah. Yes. Our older, our old friends, non-member friends, really didn't quite know what to think about it or do with us. You know, we didn't, we put aside any vices that, well, partying was no longer a part of our life. [CHUCKLING] We weren't big partiers but, you know, a social drinker or something like that, and they didn't quite know how to respond or react to us because they didn't know enough about the Church. We met in a rented home until we finally outgrew that and then we moved to a very cold warehouse until it was so cold in the winter that we had church in our home, in our playroom, as a matter of fact. And we always managed to still be late for church [LAUGHTER]. But yeah, I really don't know how to describe it except that I knew the day I was baptized that I was, well, I said to myself and to the congregation that I was looking forward to the rest of my life and I knew that it had changed in a great way and the reason I joined was, of course, the Holy Spirit touched my heart and when they read the scripture to me in Alma about not procrastinating the day of my repentance, I knew that I could not turn my back on the truth. When someone presents you with the truth, you do not turn your back on it. I couldn't. "Lay aside my worldly ways and join this Church," that's what my heart said.

RICK STARR: That is great.

JOHN ENSLEN: We had been attending church in Montgomery for about a year, so this would have been about May of 1974. And I remember a fast and testimony meeting and back then we just stood up at our seat in the congregation and bore our testimony without walking up to the microphone.

RICK STARR: Oh, yeah. Uh-huh.

JOHN ENSLEN: There were probably about 50 people in the meeting, I would suppose, but I stood up and said that "Though you here may not believe this, but I believe that within five years, the Lord will provide for us our own branch in Wetumpka, Alabama." Now, that was a shock to those people. The mouths opened on many of them [CHUCKLING] because they had struggled for decades and decades in Montgomery to produce a couple of fledgling branches at the time. This was part of a district; it was not yet a stake, part of a stake. But

I terribly underestimated the Lord. By October of that very year, October 20 to be exact, we held our first sacrament meeting in Wetumpka, Alabama, in the small rental house that Diane mentioned. But the—but part of our success in being able to do that was dependent upon the Lord sending a family to Wetumpka to live, and it was the Paul and Carly Jensen family and their ten children [LAUGHTER] that moved into town.

RICK STARR: That's a branch in itself. [LAUGHTER]

DIANE ENSLEN: That was half of our branch.

JOHN ENSLEN: They provided a role model for us to see what a true Mormon family was really like. And we love these people dearly to this day and sometimes attend their family reunions because we consider ourselves to be a part of their family. So we did meet in that house for about a year and outgrew it and had to remodel a larger building which we called the warehouse and that's where it did become very cold, and then we met in our home for about six months prior to moving into our first-phase chapel on Easter Sunday in 1978, so it took that many years for the branch to move into a first-phase chapel from October 20 of 1974 until Easter Sunday of 1978.

RICK STARR: That's great. You're listening to Why I Believe on the Mormon Channel. My name is Rick Starr and today my guests are John and Diane Enslen visiting with us. They've been talking about their conversion story, and let's talk a little bit about what you're doing now. You're both sitting here in front of me with missionary badges on. Talk a little bit about what you're doing now as missionaries.

DIANE ENSLEN: We serve in the Church History Library. This is the second part of our mission. We were given—we first served in Cambodia. The Cambodia Phnom Penh Mission. We were there for 13 months. We were sent immediately upon arrival to the northern part of Cambodia to open it up and start a branch there, which we did.

RICK STARR: Now were you missionaries or were you—

DIANE ENSLEN: I'm sorry, yes, as missionaries—

RICK STARR: Okay.

DIANE ENSLEN: That was the first part of our mission. This—the part here in Salt Lake—is the second part of our mission. We had a little leave of absence to take care of my husband's father, my father-in-law, who did become critically ill and was only given just a few months to live and wanted his only son to come home and take care of him so we did. Especially in a non, majority non-member town in the south where they were asking our family members if the Church was going to let us come home and take care of my father-in-law. So we came—

RICK STARR: So that was helpful.

DIANE ENSLEN: Yes, and the Church was very gracious to give us a leave of absence to do that. So after my father-in-law passed away and we took care of the estate, we were reassigned here to

the Church History Library, Family and Church History mission, but we do serve in the new Church History Library, which is lovely, so we have had the—

RICK STARR: You've had extremes.

DIANE ENSLEN: Night and day. [CHUCKLING] The best of, the best of both worlds. A frontier mission in Cambodia and then coming here to this wonderful Salt Lake Temple campus.

RICK STARR: Would you share with us a little bit about your experience in Cambodia? The area you opened up and what is Cambodia like? What are the people like and the economy and that kind of thing.

JOHN ENSLEN: Thank you. I'd like to do that. Let me draw a contrast. It took 25 years in Alabama from the time that Diane and I were baptized until we had a ward, an active ward, which consisted of about 150 active members, and maybe 300 to 350 on the rolls. 25 years. Now and during the 25 years, Sister Enslen and I both went out with the missionaries on a regular basis. We've, we've always been missionary-minded and loved that type of work, but it was very slow and growth has not been fast in Alabama. Now I wanna contrast that with Cambodia. I think the Lord blessed us to send us to the very fringe of the growth of the Church out there in the world. The first baptism in Cambodia inside of the country took place in 1994. Sixteen years later, about 2010, there are approximately 9000 members of the Church. So you compare that with our experience in Alabama and you see the difference. But we arrived in Cambodia on April 6, 2007, one day after the arrival of the first Triple Combination in the Camay language. And the Book of Mormon itself had not been fully translated except since 1994. And the mission president almost immediately assigned us to go to an area called Siem Reap, and they asked me to serve as branch president over at the time basically a non-existent branch, and we were given four young elders with which to work and we began our labors in Siem Reap about two weeks after our arrival in Cambodia. And it was an unforgettable experience. It was wonderful. As long as we were where we were supposed to be when we were supposed to be there and had done our personal religious behavior correctly, then all we had to do was sit back and watch the miracles take place. And by the time we left on April the—I think it was maybe the 8<sup>th</sup> that we left Cambodia; there were 107 people attending that last sacrament meeting, and it has continued to grow. I think the most wonderful thing about that growth since we left though is that the local Camay people have run the Church there. There has not been another missionary senior couple to live in that town since we left.

RICK STARR: They have their own leadership and—

JOHN ENSLEN: Through their own leadership. We were determined not to leave a hole when we left Cambodia. So we went through rigorous training schedules with the local people the entire time we were there and it has grown. By e-mail we know that they are having 150 to 160 attending on Sunday and they are looking for land and—

DIANE ENSLEN: On which to build a chapel.

JOHN ENSLEN: Yeah, land to build a chapel.

RICK STARR: Wonderful. So in 13 months, you had over 100 people attending. What are the proselyting conditions like there? How does, how do missionaries share the gospel?

DIANE ENSLEN: We can't actively proselyte, but we don't have to. All we have to do is just be available on the street and they will come to us and tell us that they want to learn about Jesus Christ.

RICK STARR: Is that because of the example of other members, friends, neighbors?

DIANE ENSLEN: It's because they were blessed by, the country was blessed by President Hinckley because he knew it was ready for the gospel and it was blessed that miracles would happen and they're ready. They're pure in heart, they're loving, they're giving, they're forgiving people and they're just ready.

JOHN ENSLEN: Our young elders—American elders or Canadian elders or Anglo elders—speak fluent Camay, and that is a strange thing in Cambodia. And that attracts attention, to see an American who can speak fluent Camay. Now not all of our elders were American Anglo elders. We had native Cambodian young men serving there, too. During our year, there were 14 young men that served with us in Siem Reap and five or six of them were Camay elders and so they knew how to speak to and approach their own people without any problem. And when Sister Enslen says we can't proselyte there, what she means is we can't go from house to house and knock on doors to doors, even if they had doors on their huts. [CHUCKLING]

DIANE ENSLEN: Which they don't.

JOHN ENSLEN: But we can walk down the street and begin conversations with anyone. Now the—it is—your question raises a point that I think I should mention. When Sister Enslen and I arrived in Cambodia, we did what we thought we were supposed to do and what we had seen other senior couples do and that was go out with the missionaries and teach in these humble homes of the members. And we did that for about a month. And the conditions are, for teaching are as bad or as deplorable as you can imagine. There is no electricity in the home; even in the day time, you would need a flashlight to read anything. You can't use any of your audio or video equipment that we would use in America. The heat was oppressive.

DIANE ENSLEN: Even being from Alabama, the heat—

JOHN ENSLEN: Even being from Alabama, and the humidity is as bad as Alabama's bad days with humidity. The odors were not good, they live with their farm animals adjacent to them, their hogs or their water buffalo or their cattle. Sometimes, even though they would offer you the best food that they have, it would raise health concerns for us. There would be lizards scampering all around [CHUCKLING] and it was bad enough for me but for Sister Enslen to have one jump on her shoulder and then off on the floor and scamper around, it was a terrifying thing.

RICK STARR: And this was inside the members' or the investigators' homes.

DIANE ENSLEN: That's right. Being a nurse, I just have an antiseptic personality, [CHUCKLING] so—

JOHN ENSLEN: So Sister Enslen and I decided, “Why don’t we invite these people to our home?” We had rented the best place we could find and it had some air conditioning in it and Sister Enslen [CHUCKLING]—with a case of duct tape that we ordered from Alabama—was able to lizard-proof the house [LAUGHTER] by taping, sealing every window and door with it. [CHUCKLING] So they did and they considered an invitation to an Anglo’s home to be something very important to them, and so they accepted our invitations readily and—

DIANE ENSLEN: Well, it was new and unusual, yeah.

JOHN ENSLEN: Many of them had never been in an air-conditioned home. They had never—they don’t have theaters so I mean they had—for us to show on the wall of our home a Church video was amazing thing to them and so it was easy to get their interest that way, and we began teaching one family after another in our home. We could have baptized four or five times the number of people that we did baptize in Cambodia but we made sure that we were managing the growth. We were doing it in a controlled way. We were making sure that we were teaching families, whole families. We were making sure that they were taught over a long period of time. We were making sure that we baptized as many adult men as we did adult women. And all of these things we were able to accomplish in Siem Reap and we acknowledged the hand of the Lord in all of it because none of it was within our control but this was our design and purpose and the Lord blessed us with success.

RICK STARR: You mentioned that they don’t have theaters, they don’t have a lot of the amenities that we have here. Do you feel like that was an advantage or a disadvantage for them in accepting the gospel?

DIANE ENSLEN: Oh, well, it was an advantage for us in teaching to come and watch the videos and to come to church where there was good entertainment and socializing and a good, clean environment and to play volleyball and—we fixed a volleyball net and we fixed a, we put up a basketball goal and we had ping pong, which they are really—they enjoy ping pong in Cambodia.

RICK STARR: They’re very good [CHUCKLING].

DIANE ENSLEN: It was a good place for them to go that substituted for and did not compete so we did not have to compete with—

RICK STARR: Not as much distraction.

DIANE ENSLEN: Yes.

JOHN ENSLEN: There was a special window of opportunity for teaching the youth in Cambodia, and keep in mind that half the people in Cambodia are under 15 years of age, and they are children of destiny. They are beautiful. But we did not have to compete with the, a mall or the computer or a theater or professional sports or anything electronic. They were poor and they didn’t have the money for those things even if they existed, so the Church was a place in the beginning for them, as Sister Enslen says, a comfortable place, but as we were able to teach them, they came to church because they had a testimony of the restored gospel. I don’t know how long that window of opportunity will exist in

Cambodia but it is, we need to take advantage of it. The youth—there is a purity in the youth there. When you first start a branch, you don't have other Melchizedek Priesthood holders to assist you so the branch is operated with Aaronic Priesthood holders, even the adult men that we baptized received the Aaronic Priesthood first. But I can tell you, just like Wilford Woodruff said when he served a mission as a priest that he never felt the Spirit any stronger than when he was a priest. I saw the power of the Aaronic Priesthood conduct all the operations of a branch with great power. And it was an amazing thing to observe. Over time we were able to advance—according to their ages, of course—we were able to advance them into the Melchizedek Priesthood. And when we left, there were sufficient Melchizedek Priesthood holders to operate the branch.

**RICK STARR:** Wow, that is wonderful. You know, I attended a presentation that you put on a while ago and you talked somewhat about your mission in Cambodia. And in one of your handouts you had mentioned an experience you had with tithing. And again, this is a poor people, a poor country. Talk a little bit about your experience there.

**JOHN ENSLEN:** We taught the principle of tithing whenever we held our missionary lessons with the people before they were baptized and I remember on a particular Sunday, even though nothing had been said during the sacrament meeting about the principle of tithing, when that meeting concluded, I noticed a line of members, mainly all new members in the foyer. And they had gotten in line to pick up a donation slip and an envelope to complete it. And the ones who had already gone through the line were looking for a window sill or a flat place to write and they were sharing pencils, and the room had become crowded with nothing but tithe payers. And it was an amazing scene to watch. You have to understand the poverty of these people. The ones who have a very good job make about \$30 a month. A very strong construction worker, male, who would work from daylight to dark, could make \$2 in a day, and that would be one of the higher paying jobs. Many of them just made a little here and a little there as they could, but they were very faithful tithe payers, and later that Sunday, I remember opening up, I think it was, 33 envelopes which represented—a lot of those were for couples which would have represented, you know, 50 or more people who were full-tithe payers, and I said to myself, “These people are going to tithe themselves out of poverty.”

**RICK STARR:** That's wonderful. If you're join—if you're just joining us, this is Why I Believe on the Mormon Channel. Today our guests are John and Diane Enslen who are missionaries in Salt Lake at the Church Office Building, in the Family History Department, and they've come from Alabama. We've been talking about their conversion story and their mission to Cambodia, and they had 13 months in Cambodia, took a break for 13 months to care for John's parents, John's father, and now you are serving the remainder of you mission here in Salt Lake at the Church Office Building. Talk a little bit about what you're doing here.

**DIANE ENSLEN:** The Church History Library is where we are and we take oral histories from emeritus General Authorities and other—and others. Everybody has a wonderful story to tell about conversion or about their life in the Church. But that is mainly what my husband has done. I have always accompanied him and done a few little things for him during the interview but since his occupation is an attorney, he knows how to conduct an interview [CHUCKLING] and he has a love for history. I was not sure that I was cut out for this

mission. [CHUCKLING] I thought I was more cut out for the Cambodian mission till I got there, [CHUCKLING] but I'm not much of a historian. What I have is a love for people, so they have put me also working in the clinic as a nurse—I'm a registered nurse. So there are other things to do here besides just Church and Family History. And I've also worked in a missionary data processing input program in the Church History Library, too, so I can say that these ten months here, I've had some of my happiest days. In Cambodia, I went thinking I had a testimony. I found out whether I did or not there because I was not always so comfortable in Cambodia. I always loved the people but it was very hard to be away from, have an ocean in between me and my family. But I found myself closer to the Lord in Cambodia than I have—and my Heavenly Father—than I ever have been in any other place. Even here with the temple just across the street, which is so inspiring to look at every day. I was just equally inspired in Cambodia to look at those wonderful people who had come from a Buddhist background join the Church. Now they could have joined another Christian church because there are other Christian churches there, too, but the ones who were pure in heart and found the gospel of Jesus Christ in its true form, who came to us, certainly were an inspiration to me to watch them grow in the gospel and know that they had to, they had to believe it, coming from the Buddhist background that they did. The Church gave them the true gospel, it gave them hope for their future, which they really don't have much hope there. Other organizations are trying to give them hope in the form of medical aid and humanitarian types of aid. Not only our Church but other churches, too.

JOHN ENSLEN: Their lack of economic opportunity—

DIANE ENSLEN: Yes.

JOHN ENSLEN: Really holds them back. But they aren't lazy. I mean, you give them a little job to do and they're as busy as bees in a hive just getting that little plumbing job done or that little carpentry job done or—one example of that, we had a dump truck to deliver a full load of gray gravel in front of our chapel. Because the roads are red dirt, which when it rains it produces mud that people would track into the chapel, so to correct that situation, we had some gray gravel delivered. Well, the members—mostly youth—had that entire dump truck load leveled within 2 ½ hours using nothing but their hands, a few shovels and what we call farmers baskets. I never did see a wheelbarrow in Cambodia. I'm sure there must be one over there somewhere but I never saw one in 13 months.

RICK STARR: They use baskets instead.

JOHN ENSLEN: They use baskets. And they just, they just work so hard, and if they had economic opportunity, I know that many of them would begin to prosper and flourish as a result. But—

DIANE ENSLEN: I think also what I was trying to say a minute ago was, not only did they gain a testimony, but they strengthened my testimony. The Church gave them hope, it gave them the gospel, it taught them who they were, where they'd come from and where they were going. So it—like it does anyone who gains a testimony of the gospel—it gave them, it anchored their lives.

RICK STARR: You know, you've served in the extremes—

DIANE ENSLEN: Yes.

RICK STARR: Of missions. Out in a third-world country where there is poverty, and now you're serving at the Church headquarters in Salt Lake. But while you were on your mission in Cambodia, you had parents who were sick, you had children who were sick and had struggles. You missed holidays and vacation time, and with all that in mind, what is your advice to senior couples who are considering going on a mission?

DIANE ENSLEN: Like I said a minute ago, I've spent some of my happiest days on my mission and especially I think the fact that I'm surrounded here with such wonderful people. Salt Lake is not the Salt Lake City it used to be. There's crime. We have had more crime committed against us here [LAUGHTER] than we did in Cambodia.

RICK STARR: Oh really?

DIANE ENSLEN: But working with these wonderful people in the Church History Library in this mission, I could be upset at home at our apartment just across the street but the closer I got to the Church History Library, as soon as I was there and surrounded with those wonderful missionaries and those wonderful Church employees, I was happy, there was a big smile on my face.

JOHN ENSLEN: I would never soft-sell a mission for seniors because it isn't easy. There are difficult times. Life goes on. Life still happens in the mission field. I think it is a figment of someone's imagination if they believe that while serving on their mission, everything will just go perfectly every day.

DIANE ENSLEN: I thought everybody who served their mission loved every minute, [CHUCKLING] every hour, every day of their mission. [CHUCKLING] We've had sons who've gone on missions in third-world countries and an eye-opening experience to me was when I was in Cambodia and a little bit uncomfortable in those first couple of months. One of my sons said, "Mom, it's okay. I cried for three months when I was—" [LAUGHTER] "the first three months, every day, when I was on my mission," and he has now made a career out of where he went on his mission.

RICK STARR: Oh!

JOHN ENSLEN: Well, he was in Brazil and he learned Portuguese and he teaches at West Point now.

DIANE ENSLEN: Yeah, got his doctorate in it and, yeah. So he's the one—it's, you know—you don't realize that a mission is tough. A mission to the southeast, I think, is probably one of the toughest missions in the United States. And I tell our boys that, and our girls that come—our elders and our sisters that come. It's just not an easy thing, but it is worth it. And as soon as we get back home and can make sure that everything is taken care of, I suppose we will go on another one.

JOHN ENSLEN: I'm so happy to hear my wife say that. [LAUGHTER]

RICK STARR: Just what you were hoping for.

JOHN ENSLEN: That's what I'm hoping for, too. Yeah, the bottom line is if you are a senior couple, go and do it. It will be the happiest time of your life even though in some ways, it may be the hardest time of your life. I highly recommend it.

DIANE ENSLEN: The gospel is a gift. What better gift can you share with others?

RICK STARR: That is so true, so true. Well, as we wrap up today, the title of this program is Why I Believe. Would you mind sharing your testimonies as we conclude today's program? Sister Ensen and then Brother Ensen, please.

DIANE ENSLEN: Well, I do know that this Church is the Church on the earth today that has, has been restored by Jesus Christ. It is His Church. I know that we have a prophet who is led by revelation and who leads this Church and I love him and I know he loves us all. I know that Jesus Christ is my Savior. I view Him with very reverent feelings and appreciate so much His atoning sacrifice. And I will turn it over to my husband.

RICK STARR: Thank you.

JOHN ENSLEN: Well, the Holy Ghost has borne witness to me many, many times of the truthfulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The most horrifying thought that ever gallops across my mind is, "What would I be doing now if it were not for the gospel of Jesus Christ?" I, too, love my Savior and I know that He is the Son of God, the Creator of this earth under the direction of the Father. I know that He came in the meridian of time and lived a perfect life, which qualified Him to be our Savior. I know that He is the Only Begotten of the Father. I know that He suffered beyond our comprehension as a substitute for us, as a proxy for us, if we will but have faith in Him and repent and try to live the best life that we can. I know that He was resurrected. I know that He has provided a resurrection for all of us. I know that He will return to this earth again in great glory. I don't know whether I'll be on earth when that occurs or not but I anticipate that day and look forward to it in my life. I'm thankful for the peace, indescribable, that I can enjoy in my life as a result of the knowledge of these things. I love the Prophet Joseph Smith. I love the Book of Mormon. I love the feelings that I get when I study it and read it and try to abide by its principles. I'm thankful for all that I have, all that I am and all that I can become because of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

DIANE ENSLEN: If I just might add, we are so blessed in this earth life. We have been—we're so thankful for our blessings but we're thankful for our trials and tribulations, too. Our blessings we're grateful for, our trials are what has strengthened us.

RICK STARR: Well, Elder and Sister Ensen, thank you so much for being with us today on Why I Believe. It's been a great pleasure to hear your conversion story and your experiences on your missions as you've been so kind to be with us here today. Thank you.

This is Why I Believe on the Mormon Channel. For more information on this program and other programs on the Mormon Channel, please visit [radio.lds.org](http://radio.lds.org). Thanks for listening.

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