

# PURE RELIGION

## The Crippled Shepherd Who Walked

Twelve-year-old Amaraa was alone and tending his family's flock of sheep the night the blizzard hit. Driving snow and biting wind blasted the Mongolian countryside with deadly cold as the young boy fought to stay alive and survive the night.

They found him the next day—alive, but so severely frostbitten that local physicians were forced to amputate both of his legs just below the knee.

Amaraa soon realized that he had lost more than his legs. He had also lost his independence, his self-reliance, and his future. Because he had to be carried wherever he wanted to go, Amaraa was forced to drop out of school. When he reached the age where his friends were finding employment, Amaraa remained at home, immobile and feeling useless.

Eventually, Amaraa moved in with his sister and her husband's family, both of whom were members of the Church. As the years passed, Amaraa began developing friendships with the missionaries of the local Songin Branch who would come to visit his family. Five years after that fateful night in the blizzard, he entered the waters of baptism and became a member of the Church.

Early Sunday mornings, the elders arrived at his house and carried him on their backs to a taxi. Once they arrived at church, the missionaries would carry him into the chapel. When the meetings were over, they carried him back to his home.

When President Gibbons of the Mongolia Ulaanbaatar Mission learned of Amaraa's dedication, he was moved with compassion.

Amaraa's family was willing to work hard for a set of prosthetic legs, but it would be impossible for them to come up with the money needed so that Amaraa could once again walk. President Gibbons supplemented their efforts with fast offerings, and by September 2002, seven months after Amaraa's baptism, instead of prosthetic legs, everything was in place for an operation to allow him to walk again. "The next time I go to church," Amaraa told the missionaries, "I will get there by myself."



Before long, Amaraa was able to make good on his promise. The operation was a success, and Amaraa's legs were prepared for his prosthetic limbs. Soon, and with the help of temporary crutches, he made his way to church. The next week, he showed up at church with only one crutch.

The following week, walking only with the help of a cane, Amaraa passed the sacrament for the first time to a teary-eyed branch.

As a result of his operation, Amaraa has been able to begin his schooling again, attend seminary weekly, and join the elders—sometimes several times a week—to teach the gospel alongside them.

Six years after that fateful night in the blizzard, Brother Amaaraa will tell anyone who will listen, "I want to serve a mission for my Church."

It is a goal he never thought he could achieve, but thanks to a loving family and compassionate members of the Church, it is a goal that now is possible.