



Best
FRIENDS
Forever

By Wendy Kenney

It all started with one girl who somewhat timidly started investigating the Church while in high school. When her friend started asking questions, she invited her to go to church with her. That girl then told another friend about the Church, and soon three girls were separately meeting with the missionaries. Touched by the Spirit at the baptism of one of those girls, two more friends started investigating the Church. You could call it the ripple effect, but to Tiffani Phillips, Catlin Nord, Sara Waddell, Christina Hatton, and Kristin Breinholt, the brief period between March 3 and June 4, 2007, remains nothing short of miraculous as all five of them joined the Church, one after the other.

The first step

They point to Tiffani as the one who first started formally investigating the Church. During her junior year of high school, she started dating an LDS boy. She began attending church with his family and eventually started meeting with the missionaries in his home. Gradually, she made some changes in her lifestyle. Her friends noticed, but they thought it would pass. But to Tiffani, it was no fad; her testimony had begun.

Though some friends were openly critical of Tiffani's investigation of the Church, Catlin was genuinely curious. When Catlin started asking questions, Tiffani



Tiffani



Catlin and a missionary at baptism



Sara and Christina at Sara's baptism

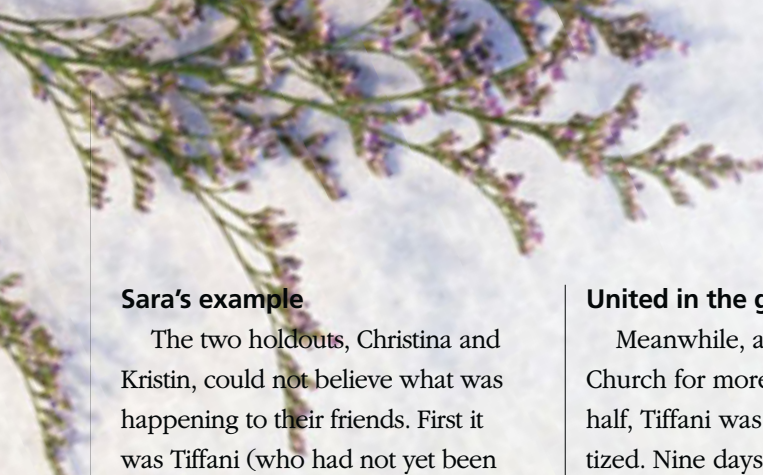
simply invited her to come to church and see for herself. Catlin left the meetings that first Sunday with a copy of the Book of Mormon and an appointment to meet with the sister missionaries. Catlin's testimony grew steadily, and soon she wanted to be baptized. On March 3, 2007, Catlin was the first of the five to be baptized and confirmed.

Bitterness and happiness

Meanwhile, their other friends were increasingly troubled about this "Mormon thing," as they called it, that had so drastically changed Catlin and Tiffani's lives. What they at first tried to ignore had become a source of sometimes bitter criticism.

Enter Sara, another friend. About the same time that Tiffani and Catlin were investigating the church, three of Sara's friends from high school were preparing to leave on missions. Sara couldn't understand what was so important that these young men would put aside a normal life to become full-time missionaries for the Church. She thought she might find some answers if she read the Book of Mormon, so she asked Catlin for a copy. Once she started reading, Sara couldn't put it down. She went to church with Catlin and there met the sister missionaries. One month after Catlin joined the Church, Sara followed her friend's example.

It was the gospel that both tested and saved their friendship.



Sara's example

The two holdouts, Christina and Kristin, could not believe what was happening to their friends. First it was Tiffani (who had not yet been baptized, though they assumed it was inevitable), then Catlin, and now Sara. But Christina and Kristin decided they weren't going to let religion come between them and their best friends, so they supported their friend Sara by attending her baptismal service.

Both Christina and Kristin were totally caught off guard by the Spirit they felt as they watched Sara's baptism and, later, her confirmation. Kristin was so surprised by the powerful new emotion that she later asked Sara what it was. After learning that it was the Holy Ghost bearing witness to the truthfulness of the ordinances of baptism and receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, Kristin knew she wanted to start taking the discussions from the sister missionaries.

Christina also experienced something completely unexpected at Sara's baptism. Even though she had told Sara that she wanted to take the missionary lessons, she had started to doubt her decision. When she came to Sara's baptism, Christina was still undecided. But when she met one of the sister missionaries who had taught Sara, her Christlike love erased all of Christina's doubts. Suddenly she knew she wanted join the Church. So Christina returned home to California, took all the discussions, and was baptized a month later, with her friend Sara in attendance at the service.

United in the gospel

Meanwhile, after investigating the Church for more than a year and a half, Tiffani was ready to be baptized. Nine days after Sara's baptism, Tiffani's baptismal service was held.

That same day, Kristin took the first discussion from the sister missionaries who had taught Sara. Less than two months later, with the loving support of her friends, her bishop, and her Relief Society president, Kristin was baptized. The circle was complete.

So in the span of three short months during the spring of 2007, five elect young women were baptized into the Church. As Catlin noted, "It was the gospel that tested our friendship, but it was also the gospel that saved our friendship."

The five friends are often asked to speak at youth conferences and firesides. As Kristin explains, "We share our stories to glorify the truth of this Church and to tell how, in the midst of the bumpy years of high school, we found ourselves strengthened and assured to choose the right."

Here is a brief testimony from each of them:



Tiffani Phillips: "I have been blessed beyond words with amazing people in my life. My family is so important to me, and the plan of salvation is a gift that I will cherish for eternity. The overwhelming feelings I had when I first went to church are undeniable and a constant confirmation that this is the true Church. I have an enduring

connection to my best friends that continues to grow because of our love for the gospel. Their beauty on the inside still takes my breath away. A few years ago, I never thought my life would have taken this path. I am eternally grateful I found the Lord and felt the Spirit that first Sunday in sacrament meeting."



Catlin Nord: "The truthfulness of this Church sometimes testifies to you far before all of the knowledge is found.

I knew this Church was true before I read the Book of Mormon cover to cover, and before I took every missionary discussion. The power of the Spirit in the first discussion, and the sweet thought that I can return to live with my Father in Heaven someday was enough to spark my love for His Church. The Spirit has guided, comforted, and helped me in countless situations. I am so grateful for my Father in Heaven and His Son, my Savior. I will be eternally grateful to Heavenly Father for placing these four beautiful girls in my life. Without a doubt, this gospel has changed our lives and the lives of those around us."



Sara Waddell: "I don't know what it was that made me do it, but I am so grateful I had the courage to ask for a

Book of Mormon and to go to church. I felt the Spirit the moment I set foot in my first sacrament meeting. The plan of salvation gave me the most comfort I have ever felt. I

thought I was happy before, but what I feel now is indescribable!

“I am a firm believer in missionary work and being an example! We should not hesitate to share our testimonies with others. Missionary work is so important, and it can be so simple. The simplest acts can change a person’s life, as I have seen them change my life and the lives of so many others.”



Christina Hatton: “I know that these four amazing girls were placed in my life for a reason. Because of their

example, I found truths I never thought existed. I wouldn’t have been able to overcome the things I did if I hadn’t learned about the Atonement, about the love Heavenly Father has for me, and that even as alone as I had felt my entire life, He had been there. He had never left my side.

“Understanding and applying the Atonement to my life was hard. I didn’t think I deserved it. That was my biggest struggle, but I overcame it though prayer. I turned to Heavenly Father and I never looked back. I gave Heavenly Father my whole heart.”



Kristin Breinholt:

“Through every experience and every situation I have been placed in, my knowledge of the

truth of this gospel has grown. My relationship with my Father in Heaven has grown, and my understanding of the Atonement has grown. One thing I love so much about belonging to this Church is that you can learn so much. When the Lord is ready and knows you are prepared, He is willing to teach you. (See D&C 14:5.)

“The Spirit is contagious. My friends and I are proof of that. The Spirit is undeniable, and as you share it with others, you open the door for them to witness the truth and happiness of this gospel. I am so thankful that my friend Sara invited me to her baptism and confirmation. I will never forget the Spirit I felt there.” **NE**

It started simply—one girl inviting a friend to church. From there, five close friends became Church members, drawing strength from each other and the Spirit.

(Below left) Kristin with the sister missionaries at her baptism. (Below right) Christina and Sara on the day of Christina’s baptism.

