



From

SKEPTIC

to

SAINT

Growing up in the San Francisco Bay Area, my family was not affiliated with any religious group, nor were many of my friends. It had never really occurred to me that there was a God. My Sundays were spent going shopping or doing homework. I was content believing that when I died, my body would turn to soil and I would cease to exist.

When I was 14, my family moved to Salt Lake City, Utah. All of a sudden, I was with a community that had a completely different outlook on the world. At first I ridiculed them. I thought it was outrageous that my friends politely turned down my invitations to go to the movies on Sundays. I thought they were crazy for wasting a precious weekend day attending a three-hour church session. What could possibly be so fascinating at church that would make missing out on sleeping in worth it? How did my classmates survive without coffee the night before a big project was due? Why did they so willingly turn over 10 percent of their earnings to their church?

After I overcame my initial culture shock, I noticed something interesting. Despite their different ways, these LDS people were incredibly happy.

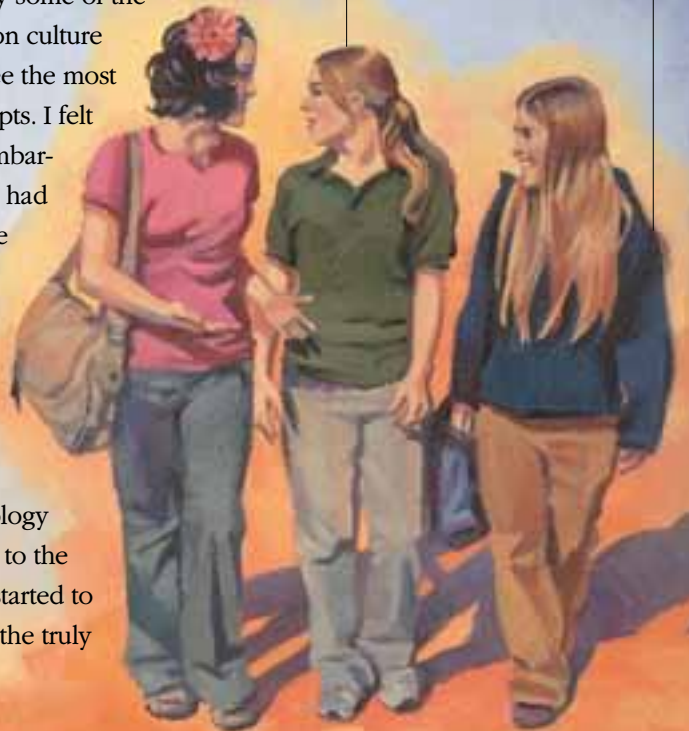
In general they were friendly and had a fresh, enthusiastic outlook on life.

Many of my friends were

preparing to give two years of their lives to teaching people about their faith. This sparked my curiosity. Never before had I seen a religion in which the members were so excited about their faith, and so willing to invest much of their time and energy helping others. As far as I could see, there was no other motive for members to reach out to people except to bring happiness to those around them. So, I became an investigator.

When I told my friends I was interested in finding out more about the Church, they were overjoyed and very supportive. At first I had many questions about the Church and was skeptical about what it had to offer me. I was so intimidated by some of the details of Mormon culture that I failed to see the most important concepts. I felt awkward and embarrassed because I had to ask what stake conference was and what “bearing your testimony” meant. It wasn’t until I became familiar with the terminology and accustomed to the traditions that I started to seek answers to the truly

My new friends were nice, but kind of strange. So why did I find myself wanting to be just like them?



FIVE WAYS TO HELP A NEW CONVERT

important questions about the gospel.

Oftentimes, when I asked someone a question about the Church, such as “How can I know that Jesus Christ is our Savior?” the answer was, “Pray about it.” For someone who wasn’t sure that there was a God to pray to in the first place, this wasn’t a very helpful answer. When I asked about the history of the Nephites and the Lamanites, most people responded with, “Read about it in the Book of Mormon.” This wasn’t very helpful either, as I had a tendency to stumble over the language of the scriptures, which was very new to me.

However, the more I read my scriptures and the more I attended church, the stronger the urge became to pray about the decisions I was making and the church I was investigating. I began praying for a better understanding of the Church. I asked to receive an answer about whether this was the true Church. To my great surprise, I received an answer. It came in response to my seeking—a quiet, peaceful assurance from the Holy Ghost that what I was reading and praying about was true.

The Book of Mormon, which had been so difficult for me to understand, began to make more sense. The teachings of the prophet and other Church leaders touched my heart and took on new meaning. Waking up to spend three hours at church on Sunday morning no longer seemed like a great sacrifice. I knew that this was the true Church and that I was to join it.

A wonderful friend and her family generously offered to host missionary discussions at their home every week. A pair of kind, dedicated missionaries

1. **Be a good example.** Acts of kindness, community service, and just being friendly are good ways to represent the Church.

2. **Be genuinely good.** Some people who leave the Church say they do so because of the actions of other members and not because they don’t believe the doctrines of the Church. Make your actions consistent with your beliefs.

3. **Be willing and prepared to answer questions.** New members have lots of questions. It can be uncomfortable for them to ask about things that seem obvious to longtime Church members. Encourage investigators to search scriptures and pray for answers, but be knowledgeable and ready to answer their questions too.

4. **Don’t criticize.** For many converts old habits may be hard to break, but this does not mean that they do not believe the Church is true. If you see someone having a hard time with a commandment, do not chastise him or gossip about him. Try to support him in good behaviors, and congratulate him when he makes lifestyle changes to meet Church standards.

5. **Include friends from all faiths in your activities.** Asking others with different backgrounds to join in activities helps friends of other faiths to see how much fun Latter-day Saint people can have together.

taught me and helped clear up questions I still had. I was fortunate to have a tremendous amount of support in learning the gospel. Several weeks after I started the missionary discussions I was ready to be baptized. Though my parents were not members of the Church and did not have an interest in joining, they were happy for me and supportive of my decision. My best friend baptized me and confirmed me. It was one of the happiest days of my life.

Even after I joined the Church and began preparing to obtain a temple recommend, I often struggled with some of the lifestyle changes I had made. I sorely missed cold ice tea on hot summer days. I sometimes felt embarrassed when I had to explain to friends who weren’t members that I didn’t want to see an R-rated movie with them.

However, when I remembered the eternal happiness I would receive if I kept the covenants I had made at my baptism and if I listened to the advice of Church leaders, those sacrifices felt more like blessings. I know that, as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we can set a shining example to our communities. The help and support of loving Church members helped me make the decision to join the Church. It is my hope that the example of Latter-day

Saints will continue to be a positive influence on the world and that many will come to know of this Church as the true Church of Jesus Christ. **NE**

