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*You never know
who is ready to
receive the gospel.*

DON'T JUDGE

Who Is Ready

I'll always remember the dinner at my 40th high school reunion. I was anxious to see old friends I hadn't seen in years and find out what had happened in their lives since high school.

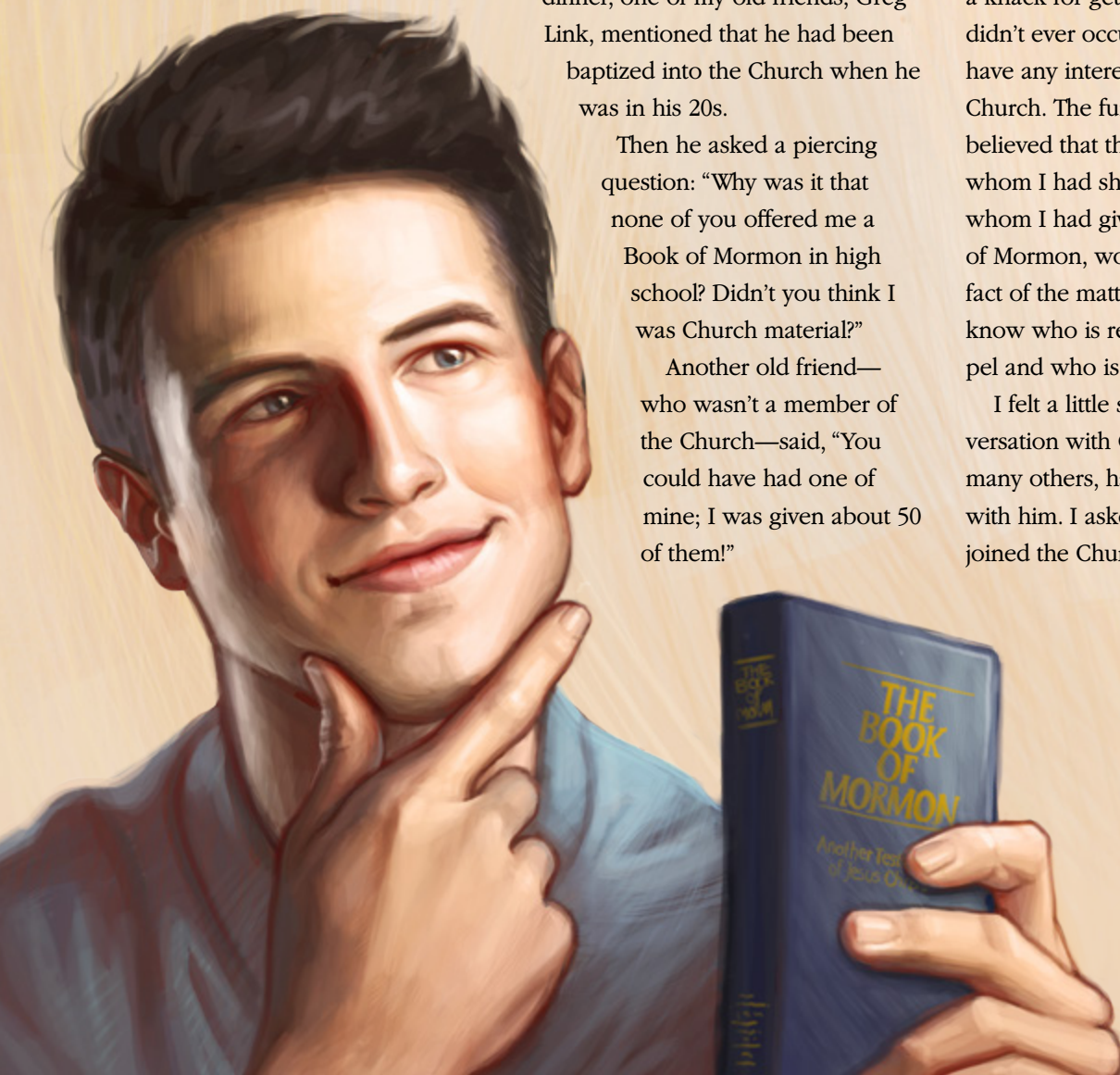
While we were chatting at a table with 8 or 10 other classmates during dinner, one of my old friends, Greg Link, mentioned that he had been baptized into the Church when he was in his 20s.

Then he asked a piercing question: "Why was it that none of you offered me a Book of Mormon in high school? Didn't you think I was Church material?"

Another old friend—who wasn't a member of the Church—said, "You could have had one of mine; I was given about 50 of them!"

I was stunned. Back in high school, if you had told me that Greg would be baptized and become a successful motivational speaker, I wouldn't have believed it. I really liked Greg. He was the kind of loyal friend you could count on when you needed him. But I knew he liked to party, and he had a knack for getting into trouble. It just didn't ever occur to me that he would have any interest in hearing about the Church. The funny thing was, I had believed that the other friend, with whom I had shared the gospel and whom I had given a copy of the Book of Mormon, would one day join. The fact of the matter is, you just never know who is ready to accept the gospel and who is not.

I felt a little sheepish after that conversation with Greg because I, like so many others, hadn't shared the gospel with him. I asked him how he finally joined the Church. Here is his story:



My family moved to Salt Lake City, Utah, when I was about 11, but I didn't join the Church until I was 24. Looking back, I can see why no one shared the gospel with me. I was not a golden contact on the surface. Actually, I was a bit of a rowdy kid. I got into fights and got into trouble at school regularly.

I had a number of LDS friends, but only one ever talked about the Church. And that was because I teased him about reading the Book of Mormon when he babysat.

I was curious about things, though. My mom took me to a local Christian church. I once asked them why Jesus hadn't come to the Americas. They kind of laughed at me for asking such a question, so I didn't ask anything else about it.

Years later I decided to visit the

visitors' center on Temple Square in Salt Lake City. There was a diorama on Christ in America. Suddenly I remembered my questions about that topic from my younger years. That's when the Spirit hit me, and I knew I was ready to listen.

The example of my friends from high school stayed with me. In fact, the people I respected most were LDS. Randy Ridd and his wife both went to my school. They were always great examples, very good people. That made a big impact on me later. I thought, "If Randy believed this was real, it must be important."

I don't know what might have happened if they had shared more about the gospel at the time. I might not have been ready. But looking back, I wish they had. I know it would have had an impact on me.



THE LORD PREPARES HIS CHILDREN

"The Lord loves all of His children. He desires that all have the fulness of His truth and the abundance of His blessings. He knows when they are ready, and He wants us to hear and heed His directions on sharing His gospel. When we do so, those who are prepared will respond to the message of Him who said, 'My sheep hear my voice ... and they follow me' (John 10:27)."

Elder Dallin H. Oaks of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, "Sharing the Gospel," *Ensign*, Nov. 2001, 9.

I feel so grateful that my example had a positive impact on Greg. I would feel even better, though, if I had done something about it at the time. If I had shared the gospel or the Book of Mormon or even just invited Greg to an activity, it could have changed his life. He might have joined the Church sooner. Maybe he would have even served a mission.

I've learned that being a good example is

truly important, but so is the responsibility to share the gospel. The Lord has commanded us to do so: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15).

So don't be afraid to share. What's more, don't be too quick to judge who is ready and who is not. You might just be surprised whose heart has been softened, even if that interest is hidden deep down where you can't see it. **NE**