



By Elder
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Of the Seventy

A Blind Date

WITH A LATTER-DAY SAINT GIRL

Renée's commitment to live the gospel changed my life.

I didn't grow up as a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, but through some members I met, I learned that when someone lives a clean, pure life, the Light of Christ shines in them. They become powerful examples.

My first contact with the Church was through a friend I made in college. He was a very good member of the Church who had served a mission. I had grown up in a Catholic family, so he often tried to start conversations with me about religion. But I wasn't really interested. My friend was very clever though, and he tried again to introduce me to the Church—by setting me up on a blind date with a Latter-day Saint girl.

Our First Date

The minute Renée and I went on our first date, I fell in love with her completely. She was so beautiful to me. I could tell there was something special about her. Soon afterward, I was ready to be serious with her and to form a family—but after several dates, she said we shouldn't date anymore because she liked me “too much” and she wanted to get married in the temple. To make things even worse for me, she soon left on a mission. After that, I decided I did *not* like the Latter-day Saints.

When she came back from her mission, our common friend invited me to a party where I could see Renée, and we started spending time together again. I had graduated from college and had a very good job, and I once again felt ready to get married. I thought I was quite a catch, so I proposed. She said no.

Reluctantly Meeting with the Missionaries

To keep the relationship going, I accepted the invitation to listen to the missionaries. One time she came to me and, with tears in her eyes, bore testimony of the Book of Mormon and begged me to read it. She wanted me to gain a testimony of the gospel so that she could fulfill her desire to marry in the temple. I loved her and didn't want to disappoint her, so I said that I would. But even though I agreed to meet the missionaries, I initially met with them only so that I could buy some more time to convince Renée to marry me. I had no intention of joining a new religion.

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After a few appointments with the missionaries, I still wasn't interested. I would sit through their lessons, but I didn't really pay attention or try to feel the Spirit. My heart was closed, because I wasn't listening to the missionaries for me; I was listening to them for Renée. Things were going nowhere, and I still couldn't convince Renée that I would be a good husband to her without being baptized. She stayed strong in her beliefs.

Personalizing the Book of Mormon

Then there was a change in the missionaries. A new missionary came to teach me, and he had an idea. He had me open the scriptures to Alma 42, and he asked me if I would read the chapter aloud to them, verse by verse. But instead of just reading it word-for-word, he wanted me to read *my* name into it. I didn't really want to, but he insisted.

So I started with the first verse. "And now, Joaquin . . ." As soon as I read those words, the book started to talk to me. As I put my name in, I felt the power of a personal testimony.

The next part of Alma 42 teaches about the Fall of Adam and Eve, and finally comes the plan of redemption. When I came to verse 29 and read, "And now, Joaquin, I desire that ye should let these things trouble you no more," I started to cry like a baby. I'd never cried like that before. I knew that the Book of Mormon was true—but I couldn't even finish reading the chapter. When I finally composed myself, I told the missionaries I wanted to get baptized. Renée was so happy. I was baptized, and she finally agreed to marry me. A year later, we were sealed in the Buenos Aires Argentina Temple.

I am so grateful for Renée's commitment to live the gospel and marry in the temple. Her faithful dating commitment not only strengthened her relationship to God and the gospel, but invited me to learn about the gospel as well. I know why she was so beautiful to me: because she was so clean, loving, and pure. Because of her faithfulness, I was able to develop a personal testimony of the Book of Mormon and this Church. ■

