

Who Is Ready?

BY ALLISON LEE BURTON

During my senior year of high school, I prayed for the Spirit to lead me to someone ready to hear the gospel. I had a friend in mind as I prayed. This friend of mine, Ashley (name has been changed), had expressed some interest in my religion, and she already held herself to the same standards as Latter-day Saint youth. I was convinced this was the time she needed to hear the gospel.

I was serving in my Laurel class presidency at the time, and during a bishopric youth committee meeting, I received a strong impression to suggest to the bishop that we have a missionary activity in Mutual. I felt impressed that the youth of our ward should invite nonmember friends to this activity for a question-and-answer session with the missionaries serving in our ward. My bishop enthusiastically set up the activity with the elders, and I was sure that this was the answer I had been praying for. Now Ashley could come and learn more about the gospel in an environment where she would not feel any pressure. I was confident that after Ashley came to the question-and-answer activity, she would be touched by the Spirit, ask to receive the missionary lessons, and in about a month would be baptized and confirmed a member of the Church.

Now my prayers turned to how to ask Ashley to the activity. I prayed to serve as an instrument in the Lord's

I thought my friend was prepared to hear the gospel, so why did I get this prompting?

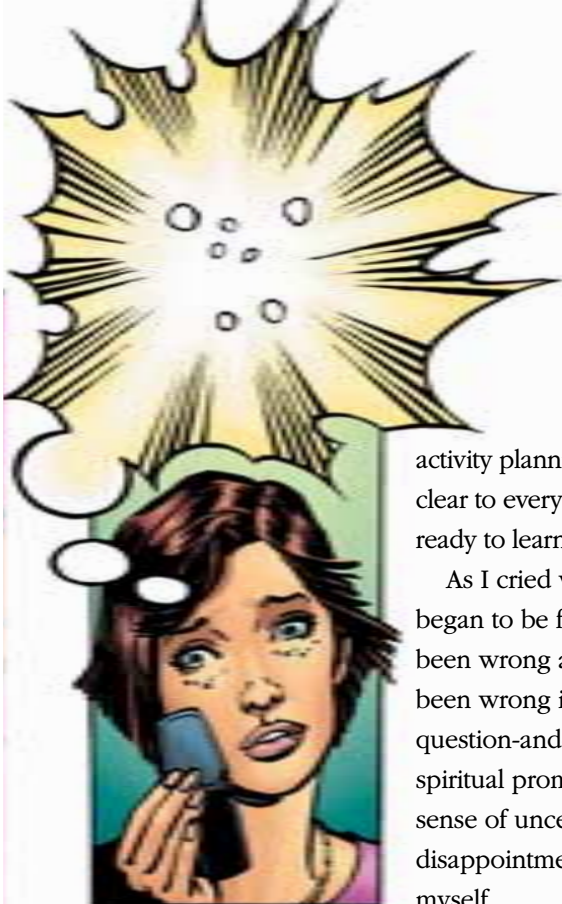
hands to introduce His plan and gospel to someone prepared to receive it. At school I invited Ashley to the activity, and she said she would ask her parents if it was all right with them.

Later that afternoon, I received a call from Ashley. She told me her parents were definitely OK with it. In fact, she explained that before her parents married, her father had lived with two LDS roommates and was very impressed with how they lived. I was overjoyed because the only obstacle I had envisioned was whether or not Ashley's parents would be OK with her pursuing another religion.

As I continued to pray about the upcoming missionary activity, I felt a calm reassurance that I was indeed an instrument in the hands of the Lord and that He was pleased I had acted on the prompting at the bishopric youth committee meeting. I looked forward to the activity with great anticipation. Ashley and I had been friends for many years, and I was excited to play a part in her introduction to the gospel and, of course, her resulting conversion.

On the morning of the activity, I received a phone call from Ashley. She had changed her mind and was no longer planning to come to the activity. I was devastated and confused. I had been praying for Ashley, I was sure she was ready, and she was the whole reason I had thrown myself into missionary mode. I also felt embarrassed. During the





It had to be Ashley! Of all the people I knew, she seemed the most likely to accept the gospel.

activity planning process, I had made it very clear to everyone that my friend Ashley was ready to learn and accept the gospel.

As I cried with frustration in my room, I began to be filled with self-doubt. If I had been wrong about Ashley, then maybe I had been wrong in believing that the missionary question-and-answer activity was actually a spiritual prompting. Engulfed in a teenage sense of uncertainty, anger, self-pity, and disappointment, I decided to skip the activity myself.

A few weeks later, as I was walking through the school library, my friend Brian asked me if I wanted to come to his baptism. Brian and I didn't have any classes together that year, so it had been quite a while since I had seen or spoken with him. The previous year we had sat next to each other in a history class and had partnered up for a class project. Our project topic, randomly assigned by our teacher, was "Joseph Smith and the Mormons." I remembered Brian had been quite interested in the topic as we did our research. However, he also liked to joke around, saying things like, "Remind me which wife number your mom is" and "There is going to be this fun party this weekend, but oh, wait—you're Mormon, so you would be no fun to go with." Thus, I initially dismissed his baptism invitation as another joke at the expense of my religion. He did not seem like the type ready to join a church with such "restrictive standards."

But the next words out of his mouth stunned me as he described the whirlwind of the past few weeks of his life. He explained

overhearing a fellow classmate and member of my ward invite someone to a question-and-answer activity at the Mormon church. When the person receiving the invitation declined, Brian asked our classmate if he could come along instead. Following the activity, he immediately began taking the missionary lessons. He read the Book of Mormon. He prayed about it. He knew it was true. He really was getting baptized, and if I wanted to, I was welcome to come. After all, he said, I was the one who introduced him to Joseph Smith and the Mormons.

In quiet amazement I realized that the Lord had heard my prayers. He was using me as an instrument in His hands to find someone He had prepared to hear and accept the gospel. It had never occurred to me to invite Brian to meet the missionaries because he did not seem, in my opinion, ready. Not like Ashley.

At that humbling moment I realized how vital it is that I act on all promptings I receive by the Spirit. Although I continue to pray that Ashley will be ready for the gospel, I learned a significant lesson from the unexpected outcome of my attempt at sharing the gospel with her. The Lord always has a purpose for the promptings He gives us, and I do not need to know or guess what it is. Instead, it is my responsibility to carry out the prompting confidently and resolutely. As I pray for missionary opportunities, act on promptings, and accept the Lord's will, rather than trying to impose my own, I can more fully serve as an instrument in the hands of God and help build His kingdom. ■