
LDS Conversion Stories

Posted by BleedsBlue55 - 2008/05/07 07:35

Hey guys, I was wondering if anyone of you could help me out?

I'm doing a project on various LDS conversion stories. If you have an interesting one, or know someone who does (especially if any of you know BYU players with such stories...), PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE contact me.

Thank you so much!

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Re:LDS Conversion Stories

Posted by imuakahuku - 2008/05/07 07:57

BleedsBlue55 wrote:

Hey guys, I was wondering if anyone of you could help me out?

I'm doing a project on various LDS conversion stories. If you have an interesting one, or know someone who does (especially if any of you know BYU players with such stories...), PLEASE PLEASE PLEASE contact me.

Thank you so much!

If you are not familiar with the Bill Carpenter conversion I encourage you to get a copy of it. He was in the MTC teaching when I was there and shared his story with us. He had recorded it and I had a copy but the tape grew old and now it doesn't work. I have searched for another copy but haven't had much luck.

Here is some of the transcript of that tape. I found this on a blog and is essentially how I remember the recording.

http://www.mormonfind.com/forum_topic.asp?TOPIC_ID=162&FORUM_ID=10&CAT_ID=2&Forum_Title=Unconfirmed&Topic_Title=Great+Misionary+Story&whichpage=1&tmp=1#pid2188

Bill Carpenter was a young man who had studied 3 and a half years in a Catholic seminary to become a Priest. Just before he was to take his final vows, he came in contact with THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS. Through the efforts of several people, including his family (I'm not sure about this part of the quote from the blog since his dad disowned him and his family severed all contact with him), and through the prompting of the Holy Spirit, he joined the Church on December 4, 1982. (IIRC it was his roommate that really got him started in his conversion).

He served his mission in the Iowa-Des Moines mission from February 1984 to February 1986. This is the conversion story which he relates of an African/American sister named Louetta Frye.

"I was serving in East Des Moines when my companion and I knocked on the door of a house. No one answered so we knocked again and still no one answered. As we started to walk away down the sidewalk, we heard, very faintly behind us, the voice of a woman. "No boys, don't go!"

We turned around. Standing in the door frame, an elderly Black African/American woman, probably in her late 70's, beckoned us to come back. She invited us in and introduced herself as Louetta Frye.

Louetta was very lonely and she desperately wanted someone to talk to - just to listen to her words. I had learned early in my mission that to teach people the Gospel, many times you have to answer their physical, or, spiritual needs, before you can prepare them to receive the Gospel. So, for about an hour we just listened to her as she talked, sharing memories of her life and of her dead husband. When she finished, she sighed heavily and said, "Okay, so you have something to share with me?"

We taught her the 1st discussion, placed a BOOK OF MORMON with her, and gave her a reading assignment. We didn't make a return appointment.

About 2 weeks passed and I felt really impressed one day that we should go back and see her. We did and encountered the same scenario. For the first hour she just talked and we didn't say anything. When she finished, she sighed and said, "Okay, I am ready to listen"

I asked, "Louetta, did you get a chance to read in the BOOK OF MORMON like we asked you to?"

She replied, "Yes, I read some"

"What did you think?" I asked.

She said, "Well, I understand, boys, the Sermon On The Mount better in 3 NEFFI (Nephi) than I did in the Bible"

"That's great, Louetta" I exclaimed. "That is what the BOOK OF MORMON does, it helps to confirm the Bible. Anything else?"

She said, "Well, I did read about a people I'm not sure I understand. They were called the Jaredites. Now were they the people that were scattered at the time of the Tower of Babel?"

My companion and I smiled at each other. We knew that the Jaredites were not in 3 Nephi and that's where the reading assignment was, so we explained to her that they indeed are.

I asked again, "Anything else, Louetta?" (After all, the third time is the charm.)

"Well, no, I don't think, then again, I read about two boys. Now their dad is a prophet, their brother is a righteous man. God even sends an angel to them." Then she threw her arms up and she said, "Oh, you can't teach some kids anything!"

We laughed. (Those boys were Laman and Lemuel, and they weren't in 3 Nephi, either.) So, I said, "Louetta, how much did you read?"

The sweetest memory of my mission is of that elderly woman picking up the BOOK OF MORMON from off the coffee table, holding it to her bosom saying, "I read it. I read all of it and I loved it"

It was a beautiful experience for us. We challenged her to be baptized and she accepted.

We taught Louetta the remaining missionary discussions. Teaching Louetta was so much fun. She was like a child in a candy store. She wanted everything, all of the knowledge that she could absorb, and she wanted it now.

She had a friend who worked at a bank, and she had her write this little contract that we were her adopted grandchildren. As the adopted grandchildren, we had certain contractual obligations to Louetta. One was that we'd come to listen to her stories, drink her hot chocolate, and eat her cookies that she made for us. It was a very binding contract, one not hard to fill!

Louetta's house was like every grandmother's house in Iowa. It's just cluttered to the ceiling with a whole lifetime of memories. She had this overstuffed couch and chair. She would sit in that big wingbacked chair and just about disappear. She had one ratty dog who would chew on her shoes under the couch while we taught her.

January, 1986, her baptism was a lovely experience. At 83 years old and 100 pounds, Louetta was frail. My companion and I both got into the waters of baptism with her. I raised her up out of the water. Crying, she embraced us and said, "It's done. 83 years and it's done"

The next day we explained to her about Visiting Teaching and Home Teachers. We told her she'd want to set a goal to go to the Temple, and we explained some other things to her. My companion said, "Louetta, you'll want to get a Patriarchal Blessing"

"What's that?" she asked.

He explained that a Patriarchal Blessing is a blueprint for your spiritual life.

She exclaimed, "Oh, I want one of those blueprints"

Louetta was an insistent, dogmatic kind of lady and she wouldn't let us leave that day until we'd contacted the Bishop and the Stake Patriarch and made an appointment for her so she could get a blueprint. We made the appointment.

Two weeks later, Louetta received her printed Patriarchal Blessing in the mail. That same morning she phoned us at 9:00am in the morning. "Are you coming over today, boy?" she asked.

And I said, "Yes, we are. You know we are." We'd been visiting her everyday for about 20 minutes. "We'll come over about 2:00pm, like we always do"

She said, "Oh no! That won't do. That won't do because it came"

"What came?"

"The blueprint came"

"The blueprint?" I asked, totally confused.

"The blessing. I want you to come over this morning!"

I told her we'd be there about 9:30am.

When we arrived, Louetta handed me the blessing and said, "I'd like you to read that for me"

I said, "No, Louetta, that's personal. I think you should be the first to read it."

She asked me again to read it and again I declined, saying, "I think it's between you and the Lord and you ought to read it first."

Her eyes got big and for the first time ever since we began teaching her, she called us "Elders"

"Now, Elders, you don't understand, do you?"

I said, "I don't understand what, Louetta?"

My eyes haven't seen words on a written page in over 15 years. But, when you gave me that book, I knew it was true because I saw the words and the Lord granted me that power until I finished its last page. Well, I don't have that power anymore. My eyes are dim once again. Would you please read my blessing to me?"

For a long time we just sat there. Finally, I started to read Louetta her blessing. It talked about the elect woman that she was and all that God had planned for her. I got about 3/4 of the way through it, and I read a line that changed my mission and changed my life.

It said that Louetta would have joined the Church 25 years earlier if the Elder that had accepted his call would have gone. But he did not. But now, two other missionaries had been prepared to teach her. And they have proven themselves worthy of that blessing because of some sacrifice and trials on their part.

THIS was the last month of my six-month extension.

I can't imagine what my life would have been if I'd never met Louetta.

Louetta passed away that night, having completed all that the Lord wanted her to do.

One thing we need to know is that our decision to serve, or, not to serve, affect other people. That when the Lord chooses a missionary, he just doesn't say, "Well, North Carolina Charlotte Mission needs missionaries, or, The Iowa Des Moines mission needs missionaries" He matches your personality, your talents and your gifts with certain people that reside in that mission, so that their lives may be touched."

Bill Carpenter is now an LDS Seminary teacher and lives in Spanish Fork, Utah, with his wife, Julie Ashman Carpenter, and their son, Levis.

BTW are you looking for our conversion story only or do mission conversion stories count?

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Re:LDS Conversion Stories

Posted by bengel - 2008/05/07 08:44

Here is my recollection of a talk given by our High Council Rep. It's a recollection of a recollection, so someone wishing to verify it should talk to Bill Carpenter. I sent this to my missionary son.

Today's sacrament meeting was excellent. Mark Young, our High Council rep, gave a talk about a guy named Bill Carpenter. I wish you could have heard it.

At age seven, Bill's Dad asked him what he wanted to be. Bill didn't really know. His Dad suggested he become a Priest.

His family supported him in this as he grew up. When he graduated from high school he went to a University to study for the priesthood. It was expensive. It was a Jesuit school.

In his first year, he began studying the Bible on his own. His professors discouraged this, and enlisted the aid of his parents. He began awakening at 2:00 a.m. He studied on his own for two hours, then went back to sleep.

In the process, he had a spiritual experience. He came to understand that the Father and the Son are separate. He made the mistake of announcing this to his class. The Priest overseeing his education tried to persuade him the concept of the Trinity was correct.

Bill was convinced it was not. However, at the urging of his parents and being told he had to recant or he would be expelled, he recanted.

After three years, he took a sabbatical. He enrolled in the University of Idaho. His roommates were returned missionaries. He told them they would not convert him.

When the full time missionaries taught him about the Godhead, he knew they were telling the truth. He committed to be baptized. He also knew he had to tell his parents that their dream he become a Priest would not be realized.

He called home to invite his parents to his baptism. He talked to his Mom. She told his Dad. Bill said he wanted to come home to speak to his Dad.

When he arrived, his belonging were on the porch. A hand-written note from his Dad told him he had to choose between being a Carpenter or being a Mormon.

He packed his things. When he arrived back at school he spoke to the missionaries. He said he could not be baptized because it would hurt his family too much. The Elders told him he could make his family happy in this life by choosing not to be baptized, or make them happy in the next life by being baptized.

He was baptized. His parents broke off all communication, as did his nine siblings.

A year after he was baptized, he left on a mission. While on his mission, his Dad went in for stents. He ended up with a quadruple by-pass, and things were not looking good.

His mother called Bill and told him his father was dying. Bill asked his mission president to let him go home. The mission president bought him the ticket. He also told Bill that he felt inspired to ask Bill to extend his mission from 18 to 24 months.

Bill could not understand how his mission president could make such a request. His mission president asked Bill to pray about it.

Before he left for home, Bill's mother called. She said that though his father had been unconscious most of the time for the previous 18 days, he had awakened and wanted to talk to Bill.

When Bill spoke to his Dad, he learned his Dad had had an experience that he concluded was the voice of the Lord. Bill's Dad said he was told his life depended on Bill finishing his mission.

From what was previously posted, we know why Bill was asked to extend his mission. If he had not extended, he would not have taught Louetta Frye.

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Re:LDS Conversion Stories

Posted by imuakahuku - 2008/05/07 09:06

bengel wrote:

Here is my recollection of a talk given by our High Council Rep. It's a recollection of a recollection, so someone wishing to verify it should talk to Bill Carpenter. I sent this to my missionary son.

quote]

Yep that was all on his tape. He also mentioned that when he converted he got a letter from a sibling that said the Priest had called him a son of the devil and his dad said the priest was right. And so his sibling told him that he would no longer have any contact with him.

The conversion part itself was pretty cool. He mentioned how his roommate would ask him a simple theological question and after a disertation his roommate would say something like "that was good, but have you ever thought of it this way" and would then give some little LDS insight.

A great tape if you can get a hold of it and hear it. I wrote to deseret books and asked them to make it available in MP3 format. I hope they are able to do that.

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Re:LDS Conversion Stories

Posted by BleedsBlue55 - 2008/05/07 10:42

Yeah, that's a dang good one! Does anyone know if Bill Carpenter is still a Seminary teacher in SF or, if not, a good way to get a hold of him? (Is he even still alive?)

Basically what I want this all for is a (photography) portfolio I'm putting together of beautiful portraits of converts with their amazing and inspiring conversion stories to go with it.

I'd love personal ones specifically because I need to build this portfolio on a smaller local scale first. If you, or someone you know, is from here or another country (but living in Utah or close by) that has an inspiring story...that is EXACTLY what I'm looking for.

Missionary stories are totally ok too. Most of you probably didn't serve in Utah, but if you know where the converted people in your stories are and how to contact them still, I would love to know.

Thank you all again!

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Re:LDS Conversion Stories

Posted by ammoncougar1 - 2008/05/07 11:30

I hate to put a damper on the story but there is no Bill Carpenter in CES. As a seminary teacher I have access to all employees whether in the field or in the Central office worldwide and his name does not exist. One of my colleagues and I checked this story out several years ago by calling Church headquarters and having them do a search for Bill Carpenter that served in that mission at that time and it does not exist. Nor does sister Fry, at least according to those I spoke with. I heard the same tape. It was the tape that made me want to verify the account. If any of you firsthand know it to be different or have differing information to substantiate it feel free to PM me. I would love to use something like that in class if it were true.

Go Cougs!!!

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Re:LDS Conversion Stories

Posted by BleedsBlue55 - 2008/05/07 12:22

Thanks ammoncougar for clearing that up! So...since you're a seminary teacher...perhaps you know of some stories that are true? :)

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Re:LDS Conversion Stories

Posted by imuakahuku - 2008/05/07 13:10

ammoncougar1 wrote:

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Go Cougs!!!

He was a teacher at the MTC when I was there. He told us this story first hand. He later recorded it. If you want confirmation from someone in Utah, look up Jeff Shaw (I think he is now a bishop of a ward in Logan). He can confirm it. I even got a copy of one of the first tapes, but I seem to remember the name Rob Carpenter on the cover of the cassette but everywhere I look the name Bill comes up so I just assume I am wrong. I think I still have the cassette but it doesn't work anymore. But again this was first hand. We were there in the Sunday discussion room when he gave it. So unless he was just making it up on the spot I have to say I believe him. Again try contacting Jeff Shaw.

The cassette was being sold by deseretbooks for a while under the title A Light Shall Break Forth but I never knew of the title because mine just had his name on it. But I need to look and see if it said Bill or Rob. I have always thought it said Rob. But I forget names pretty easily so I may have changed it in my mind w/o realizing it.

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Re:LDS Conversion Stories

Posted by bengel - 2008/05/07 13:14

I will check with my High Council rep. I had the impression he knows the story first hand.

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Re:LDS Conversion Stories

Posted by Conosticator - 2008/05/07 13:20

ALASKAN-CANADIAN

President: Milton L. Weilenmann 1960-1963

Date: Friday, Oct. 1, 1999, 6:30 p.m.

Location: Granite Stake Center 2005 S. 900 E. , Salt Lake City.

Special guest speaker will be Brother William Carpenter, a convert from the Catholic faith who had studied for four years in the Catholic Seminary before he converted to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

A special musical number will be sung by Sean & Charlene Tippets

(Elder Gale D. Stradley's daughter and son-in-law).

Home phone: Milton L. Weilenmann 801-596-9996

Activities: 6:30 Testimony meeting. 7:30 Please bring finger food or cookies.

Re:LDS Conversion Stories

Posted by imuakahuku - 2008/05/07 13:55

imuakahuku wrote:

ammoncougar1 wrote:

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Better yet contact Bill himself. He most likely still lives in SLC.

http://www.mission.net/iowa/des-moines/alumniplist.php?uID=186275&search_res=1&location=&start_year=&end_year=&president=&last_name=carpenter&first_name=&order=last_name&max_num=20&desc_order=&pic_only=&gender=&max_num=20&s=&chr=&num=1&max=1

Re:LDS Conversion Stories

Posted by BleedsBlue55 - 2008/05/08 07:25

Sheesh, you guys are awesome. Thank you for figuring all that out for me! Those links are a huge help!

Please, if anyone else has any convert stories, let me know! Thanks!

Re:LDS Conversion Stories

Posted by whiteshoes - 2008/05/08 09:53

I know Bill Carpenter personally, and I have heard him speak. As others have said, he had a tape about his conversion story called "A Light Shall Break Forth." Amazon.com says it is not available, but it was recorded in 1990 by CFI (Cedar Fort Inc). I don't know if he's in CES now, (apparently not), but I know he was at one time.

I might suggest you get the book "Why I Believe" that Deseret Book published just before the Winter Olympics. It has the testimonies of the most well known Latter-day Saints, many of which are conversion stories (like Gladys Knight's story). Here's the link:

http://www.amazon.com/Why-Believe-Church-Jesus-Christ/dp/1570087237/ref=pd_bbs_sr_2?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1210261458&sr=8-2

There was also a book published years ago called "From Clergy to Convert" by Stephen Gibson which is also available for cheap on Amazon.com:

http://www.amazon.com/Clergy-Convert-Stephen-W-Gibson/dp/0884944921/ref=sr_1_1?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1210261645&sr=1-1

Also, Elder Hartmon Rector Jr. published a few volumes of a book called "No More Strangers" which is a compilation of conversion stories.

http://www.amazon.com/No-more-strangers-Hartman-Rector/dp/0884943127/ref=sr_1_7?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1210261756&sr=1-7

I don't know where you live, but I'll bet the BYU library would have all of these.

Best wishes with your project!

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Re:LDS Conversion Stories

Posted by whiteshoes - 2008/05/08 10:11

Here's another. Thurl Bailey who used to play for the Jazz has a video about his conversion. It's called Thurl:Forward With New Power. I found it on eBay at:

http://cgi.ebay.com/Thurl-Bailey-Forward-with-New-Power-Mormon-LDS_W0QQitemZ320228789263QQihZ011QQcategoryZ309QQrdZ1QQssPageNameZWD1VQQcmdZViewItemQQ_trksidZp1638Q2em118Q2el1247

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Re:LDS Conversion Stories

Posted by ammoncougar1 - 2008/05/08 11:29

BleedsBlue55 wrote:

Thanks ammoncougar for clearing that up! So...since you're a seminary teacher...perhaps you know of some stories that are true? :)

I'm not sure I cleared anything up. It seems I have caused some consternation amongst those that know the man. I communicated with my colleague with whom we had called and he didn't seem to recall the conversation. I do know that his name appears nowhere in the CES personnel information so I suppose I was accurate about at least part of it. My apologies for leading any astray. I just tend to err on the side of caution because seminary teachers seem to get called on a lot of stuff we say. (rightfully so of course).

Good luck. I too recommend the book Why I Believe. It contains some great ones!

Go Cougs!!!

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Re:LDS Conversion Stories

Posted by JaredP - 2008/07/06 22:05

Brother Carpenter taught Seminary at Mountain View High School in Orem in the early 90's. He told his conversion story in a fireside at the beginning of the school year in 91'-92' for all seminary students. That was when I felt impressed to serve a mission. It is a very powerful conversion story.

Re:LDS Conversion Stories

Posted by washutech - 2008/08/08 08:27

Is there anyone who knows where I can find/buy a copy of Bill Carpenter's talk about how he found the church?

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Re:LDS Conversion Stories

Posted by blueraspberry - 2008/08/14 11:54

I also heard Bro. Carpenter's story first hand in the MTC. But it wasn't the conversion story I remember the most. His lesson on the atonement, I believe was when I first started to understand the meaning of it.

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