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FrontLine

BRINGING THE TRUTH HOME



The New Face of Mormonism

The LDS View of God and the Godhead

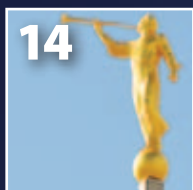
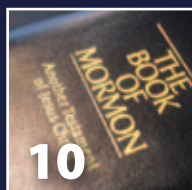
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We would like to thank Aaron Young for coordinating this issue of *FrontLine* magazine.

A Brief History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (LDS), known as the Mormon Church, greatly reveres its founder, Joseph Smith Jr. According to the LDS-endorsed history, which differs from other more accurately documented accounts, Smith was a prophet of God sent to restore the true church of Christ to the world. Due to a great apostasy, the gospel had been lost since the days of the apostles. John the Baptist appeared to Smith, baptized him, and conferred upon him the authority of the Aaronic Priesthood, enabling him to restore the true gospel to the world. Later, Peter, James, and John also appeared and bestowed the authority of Melchizedek priesthood upon Smith.

Genesis of the LDS under Joseph Smith Jr.

Born to Joseph and Lucy Mack Smith on December 23, 1805, in Sharon, Vermont, Joseph grew up poorly educated. Several moves by the family eventually brought them to Palmyra, New York. Here the story of Joseph and his church would begin to unfold.

According to Mormon history, while Joseph Jr. was praying in his room one night, an angel named Moroni appeared to him. Moroni gave him information concerning some "gold

plates" buried centuries before in the nearby hill Cumorah by a man named Mormon. These plates supposedly contained a history of a family of Jews who migrated from Jerusalem to the New World in 600 BC. Their descendants became the North American Indians.

The discovery of an unusual dark stone on his father's farm would be instrumental in "translating" the plates. Placing the stone in his hat, Joseph would bury his face in the hat and wait for a word or phrase to appear on the stone. A scribe would then copy the information on a piece of paper. Allegedly, Smith never looked at the plates. Within two months a 275,000-word manuscript was completed. Following the publication of *The Book of Mormon*, Smith organized his church of six members on April 6, 1830, naming it "The Church of Christ."

When problems with the law arose, Smith moved to Kirtland, Ohio. The following events at Kirtland affected the future of the church.

1. Christian communism (Acts 2:44, 45) was tried (and tried later in Nauvoo, Illinois) but failed.
2. The Mormons' first temple was constructed.

Continued on page 6



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FrontLine magazine is a blessing to me, as well as to my ministry here in Hong Kong!

Derek Hon
Kin Sang Baptist Church

Here are several ideas I have [for future issues of *FrontLine*]: The changing face of missions philosophy, using the Internet in ministry, and living in a hostile culture. It would be great to have a solid Biblical foundation articulated by a group of younger guys along with some men that have been ministering longer [with] the emphasis that the generations need each other. Two big issues that are hammering the church right now [centering around the family are] marriage (gay marriage and divorce) and child rearing.

Joel Arnold
Bob Jones Memorial Bible College, Philippines

In our Christian school we are in need of further quality teaching staff. As you are probably well aware, Christian education is very much in its pioneering phase in our country in comparison to the USA, and, consequently, the supply of quality Fundamental Christian workers is limited. Hence, I look to you brethren for assistance please, as we work and pray towards God's supply.

We are in immediate need of

1. A primary (elementary grades) teacher, either female or male, who would be willing to teach any grades from kindergarten to grade 6.
2. A secondary (high school) teacher, with specialization (or major) in Mathematics. This person could again be either male or female. He or she would need to be able to completely teach . . . grades 11 and 12 Mathematics.

Don Leys, Principal
Condell Park Christian School, Inc.
Condell Park, New South Wales

Editor's Note: The letter above was addressed to Dr. Vaughn. Any interested parties may contact the Home Office at info@fbfi.org or 864.268.0777.

For many years, **Fundamental Baptist Fellowship International (FBFI)** has been a Department of Defense-recognized Chaplains Endorser. Since the last issue of *FrontLine*, FBFI has received a letter of authorization to endorse VA (Veterans' Affairs) Hospital Chaplains as well. A VA chaplain provides "pastoral care for veteran patients, their families, as well as the health care team." If you are interested in learning more about the chaplaincy, please contact our Home Office at info@fbfi.org or 864.268.0777.

Terry and Sandy Washer are missionaries in Zambia, where they serve alongside their son Nathan and his family. Their current ministries in Zambia include church planting, visitation, Bible studies, teaching reading, and teaching sign language. Terry encourages many as he soldiers on in spite of physical limitations.



Dr. David Canedy is now serving as deputation director with Baptist World Mission in Decatur, Alabama. The Lord has uniquely prepared Dave and his wife, Nancy, to serve missionaries—with over thirty years of ministry, including youth ministry, missionary service, and as senior pastor and board member with Baptist World Mission. Dave also serves BWM as field administrator for the United States and Canada. It is the Canedys' delight to serve missionaries, pastors, and churches for the cause of worldwide missions.



Aaron Young is pastor of Grace Baptist Church in Elko, Nevada. His burden is to have a church body that shows love for God by glorifying Him through the winning and discipling of souls. Set in the midst of a spirit of Western independence, Mormonism, and the challenging gold mining schedule, along with vices of a Western town, the church recently expanded its building and desires to use it to further God's work in the hearts of men.

CH (LTJG) Andrew Hoyle, USN, recently sent our Home Office this picture and note: "This picture was taken during a Community Relations Project on



15 April on Spike Island, Cobh, Ireland. The CO of USS Leyte Gulf has authorized it for release. I thought I would send it your way for a visual of some of the fun I get to have as a Chaplain. Thank you for all you do."

Correction: On page 23 of the March/April issue of *FrontLine*, the article referenced the Constitution's Second Amendment with regard to the freedom of worship. The author intended to refer to the Second Clause of the First Amendment.

A Brief History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints

(Continued from page 3)

3. A revelation stated that Christ would return to Jackson County, Missouri, meet with the Saints, and appoint them to rule the world from there.
4. Another revelation listed three heavenly kingdoms: Celestial (for Mormons), Terrestrial (for good people), and Telectial (a coined word for the future kingdom of the wicked, since a literal Hell was denied).
5. Joseph rewrote the Bible, but his “Inspired Version” of the Bible was never widely used by the church; the King James Version is the official Bible of the LDS.
6. The name of the church was changed to the Church of Latter-Day Saints.
7. The Word of Wisdom was implemented, which forbade the use of tobacco, alcohol, and hot drinks; wine was replaced with water for communion.
8. The fraudulent *Book of Abraham* was “translated” from an Egyptian papyrus fragment; years later it was determined to be nothing more than an Egyptian funeral document.
9. Smith, following popular public opinion of the time, declared that the Negro race was cursed and thus none could hold the priesthood.

Migration and Persecution

With Smith’s failing banking system in which many members lost all they had and financial disaster looming, Joseph left Kirtland in the middle of the night, moving his family to Missouri. An unwarranted and harsh persecution of the Mormons by people and officials in Missouri resulted in burned buildings, pillaging, rape, killing of animals and people, destruction of crops and confiscation of property by militia and local citizens. Mormon leaders, including Smith, were arrested and charged with treason, while the remaining Saints—estimated to be around eight thousand—were, by order of authorities, expelled from the state. Disturbed by these events, the Missouri Legislature allocated \$2000 to aid them in their departure. Following months in jail, Smith and his church leaders were released. The Saints subsequently migrated to Illinois.

Joseph again became involved in land speculation and consequently incurred substantial indebtedness for the church. Near Warsaw, Illinois, land was purchased for development of a town he named Nauvoo (a Hebrew word meaning “beautiful plantation”). Construction of a temple was initiated. Through successful missionary activities, thousands of converts flowed into town, having immigrated from the East, Canada, and England. The community grew to about 20,000. Joseph was in complete charge of all financial, political, and ecclesiastical activities.

While at Nauvoo, Joseph began writing a history of the LDS church. In it he mentions for the first time his alleged “First Vision.” In this account, which supposedly took place when Smith was fourteen, God the Father and Jesus appeared to him. Over time, Smith would relate contradicting variations of this alleged heavenly visitation. The



officially adopted church version can be read in the front pages of *The Book of Mormon*.

Joseph, attracted to the Freemasons, joined the Masonic Lodge. He replicated the rituals of the Masonic initiation and used them as a basis for the secret Mormon Temple Marriage Rites. In addition to marriage rites, baptism for the dead was also performed in the temple, based on Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 15:29.

After Smith said he received a vision concerning the practice of polygamy, his wife, Emma, resisted, but she eventually acquiesced, following pressure and threats from her husband. Unknown to her, Joseph and important Mormon men had already secretly entered into plural marriages. Section 132 of *Doctrines and Covenants* declared this practice necessary for exaltation to godhood.

Death of Smith and Ascendance of Brigham Young

Smith's secrecy in handling church money was disliked by members. He also upset male members of the church when they learned that he secretly had some of their wives sealed to him in eternal plural marriage. Using his Mormon militia he attempted to control all who opposed him. But the so-called straw that broke the camel's back came when Joseph destroyed the printing presses of a few disillusioned members. They published information about his

and the church's polygamous practices along with alleged fraudulent financial dealings. With problems—including efforts by Missouri law officials to arrest him—mounting, Smith made plans to move farther westward. The emigration eventually came, but not under his direction. Before it could take place Smith was arrested, jailed, and killed by a mob in Carthage, Illinois.

Brigham Young then assumed leadership. Under his direction the Saints migrated to Utah Territory in 1847. Due to problems, Young threatened people with Blood Atonement (cutting the throat to atone for sins) in order to control members and "gentiles" (non-Mormons). Since that time, the church has greatly grown in membership and wealth.

Following Smith's death, a splinter group established the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, appointing Joseph's son president in 1860. In 2001 the name of that church was changed to "Community of Christ."

A final note: While it is important to know LDS history, it is not wise initially to use these facts when dealing with an LDS person. This will become clearer as you read other articles in this issue of *FrontLine*.

Dennis Cason has planted and pastored churches in the West for fifty years. He and his wife, Gayle, currently serve at Grace Baptist Church in Delta, Utah.



The LDS View of God and the Godhead

Mike Bardon

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (also referred to as “The LDS Church” or the “Mormons”) claims to follow Christ and to be a Christian religion. However, when attempting to compare what they believe with orthodox Christian doctrine, there is a problem. There is no official LDS document or book that records accepted LDS doctrine.

The reason for this is that not only did Joseph Smith change his doctrine from the time of the first edition of *The Book of Mormon* (1830) until just before he died (1844), but that other LDS Prophets have continued to make changes to their doctrine down through the years.

They do claim, however, that messages by the current Prophet (especially when given in their semi-annual church conference) along with their four standard works of “scripture” (the Holy Bible, *The Book of Mormon*, *The Doctrine and Covenants*, and *The Pearl of Great Price*) and statements in official church publications constitute their current doctrine.

Changing Doctrines

Joseph Smith’s original belief about God and the Godhead was somewhat orthodox but also modalistic. *The Book of Mormon* tells about the Father and Son visiting the brother of Jared. But instead of two, only one personage appears and says, “Behold, I am he who was prepared from the foundation of the world to redeem my people. Behold I am Jesus Christ. I am the Father and the Son. In me shall all mankind have light” (Ether 3:14, from *The Book of Mormon*).

The Book of Mormon teaches that God is a Spirit. It also teaches there is only one God. In Alma 11:26–31, Zeezrom says, “Is there more than one God? And he answered, No.”

In the Preface to *The Book of Mormon*, the three witnesses to the veracity of Smith’s story finish their testimony with the following statement: “And the honor be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost, which is one God. Amen.”

By 1844 Smith publicly taught the following in the King Follett Discourse (recorded in *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, compiled by Joseph Fielding Smith):

God himself was once as we are now, and is an exalted Man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens. . . . I am going to tell you how God came to be God. We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all eternity. I will refute that idea, and take away the veil, so that you may see. . . . It is the first principle of the Gospel to know for a certainty the character of God and to know . . . that he was once a man like us. . . . Here then, is eternal life—to know the only wise and true God; and you have got to learn how to be Gods yourselves . . . the same as all Gods have done before you.

Several writers have recently traced and documented the doctrines and teachings of LDS Church authorities down through the years. As a result, it can accurately be said that this teaching of Smith in 1844 is still LDS doctrine today. More thorough investigation can be found in the booklet “Does the LDS Church Still Teach That Heavenly Father Was Once a Man?” by Sandra Tanner; it can be downloaded from www.utlm.org.

From Smith’s discourse in 1844, five things can be concluded about the LDS God:

1. God the Father has not always been God.
2. God was once a man like us and has a body of flesh and bones.
3. God had to progress to become a god.
4. God is not alone. There are many gods.
5. Men can progress to become a god like the Heavenly Father.

A famous LDS couplet by Lorenzo Snow, the fifth President of the Church, often quoted by LDS people, is, “As man is, God once was: as God is, man may become.”

Facts about the True God

This is quite different than what God reveals about Himself in the Bible as being an eternal, self-existent Spirit and the only true and living God. Isaiah 43:10 says, “Before me there was no God formed, neither shall there be after me.” Isaiah 45:5 says, “I am the LORD, and there is none else, there is no God beside me.” Psalm 90:2 says, “From

Continued on Page 37



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Another Jesus

Harley Johnson

Editor's Note: Per FrontLine editorial policy, personal pronouns referring to the Christ of the Bible are capitalized in this article as in all others. However, pronouns referring to the Christ of Mormon theology are intentionally not capitalized in this article, since Mormonism clearly teaches "another Jesus."

The apostle Paul wrote to the Corinthian church,

But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtilty, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him (2 Cor. 11:3, 4).

"Another spirit," "another gospel," and the description of "another Jesus" in Mormon theology are found in their frequently revised and reprinted handbook entitled *Gospel Principles*. What does LDS theology teach about Jesus?

Lucifer's Brother?

Mormons teach that everyone was begotten and born of heavenly parents in the spirit world. The Heavenly Father is God, and we were all spirit brothers and sisters. The firstborn in the spirit world was Jesus, which makes him our elder brother. Our heavenly parents raised us to maturity in the spirit world, at which point we could progress no further without a physical body. A Grand Council was called where we learned that because of our weakness, all of us except little children, would sin¹: "Yea, all are fallen and are lost, and must perish except it be through the atonement."²

Our Father said, "Whom shall I send?"³ A momentous contest took place between brothers, Jehovah (Jesus) and Lucifer, two powerful sons of Elohim.⁴ At this council, Jesus, the older brother, prevailed, and he came to earth, gave his life for us, and took upon himself our sins.⁵ "The great sacrifice He made to pay for our sins and overcome death is called the Atonement,"⁶ which purchases "unconditional or general salvation, that which comes by grace alone without obedience to gospel law, consists in the mere fact of being resurrected." "But this is not the salvation of righteousness . . . which the saints seek."⁷ "Salvation in its true and full meaning is synonymous with exaltation or eternal life and consists in gaining an inheritance in the highest of the three heavens within the celestial kingdom."⁸ "Salvation in the celestial kingdom of God, however, is not salvation by grace alone. Rather, it is salvation by grace

coupled with obedience to the laws and ordinances of the gospel," the LDS "Third Article of Faith."⁹ With all this explanation they reject the clear Biblical statement that "the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. 6:23). When the Philippian jailer asked Paul and Silas, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved? . . . They said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:30, 31).

"Begotten by the Father in the Flesh"

The Mormons teach that Jesus Christ created many other worlds beside this one. This he did through the power of the priesthood under the direction of Heavenly Father.¹⁰ Jesus was born into this world having a mortal mother and an immortal Father.¹¹ The Mormon apostle Bruce R. McConkie wrote, "Christ was begotten by an Immortal Father in the same way that mortal men are begotten by mortal fathers."¹² According to LDS doctrine, Jesus was born as the result of a sexual union between God the Father, who has a physical body,¹³ and Mary: "Our Lord is the only Son begotten by the Father in the flesh."¹⁴

Interestingly, present-day LDS literature often avoids mention of where Jesus was born. *The Book of Mormon* statement that Jesus "shall be born of Mary at Jerusalem which is the land of our forefathers"¹⁵ is problematic for them. The Jesus of the Bible was born in "Bethlehem, in the land of Juda" (Matt. 2:6).

After his baptism the Mormon Jesus was in the wilderness for a different reason than the Jesus of the Bible. The Mormons have *The Inspired Version: An Inspired Revision of the Authorized Version* by Joseph Smith. It says, "Then Jesus was led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be with God."¹⁶ The Bible says, "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil" (Matt. 4:1).

Salvation by Grace . . . and . . .

When Jesus went to the garden to pray before being arrested, LDS teachings say that his suffering was so great that it caused him to "bleed at every pore."¹⁷ The next day he "was beaten, condemned, and nailed to the cross." *The Book of Mormon* reports that an angel said at the time of Jesus' death that "darkness should cover the face of the whole earth for the space of three days."¹⁸ The Biblical account points to three hours: "Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour" (Matt. 27:45). According to the LDS Church, not long after his resurrection and ascension into heaven, Jesus appeared to the Nephites and established his church in the Western

According to LDS doctrine, Jesus was born as the result of a sexual union between God the Father, who has a physical body, and Mary.

THE BOOK OF MORMON

Another Testament
of Jesus Christ

Hemisphere.¹⁹ “All men are . . . resurrected and become immortal because of the atoning sacrifice of Christ.” Salvation to eternal life, according to LDS teaching, is by grace coupled with obedience to laws and ordinances.²⁰

When former LDS President Gordon B. Hinckley was asked if he believed in the Jesus of the Bible, he said, “No, I don’t. The traditional Christ of whom they speak is not the Christ of whom I speak. For the Christ of whom I speak has been revealed in this the Dispensation of the Fullness of Times. He together with His Father, appeared to the boy Joseph Smith in the year 1820, and when Joseph left the grove that day, he knew more of the nature of God than all the learned ministers of the gospel of the ages.”²¹

It is clear that the LDS have another Jesus, not the Jesus of the Bible. May the Lord help us to “know whom [we] have believed” according to the Scripture so that we might effectively verbally testify to the real Jesus Christ.

Harley Johnson has served as a missionary/pastor in Utah with Northwest Baptist Mission since 1972. He can be reached at harleyj1931@gmail.com.



¹ *Gospel Principles*, The Corporation of the President of the Church of JESUS CHRIST of Latter Day Saints, 2009, 11. *Doctrine and Covenants* 29:46, 47.

² *Ibid.*, 59. *The Book of Mormon*, Alma 34:9.

³ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁴ Kimball, Spencer W., Conference Report, April 1964, Salt Lake City, 95.

⁵ *Gospel Principles*, 13.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁷ McConkie, Bruce R., *Mormon Doctrine*, Bookcraft, Salt Lake City, 1972, 669.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 670.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 671.

¹⁰ *Gospel Principles*, 23.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 53.

¹² McConkie, 547.

¹³ *Doctrine and Covenants* 130:22.

¹⁴ McConkie, 546, 547.

¹⁵ *The Book of Mormon*, Alma 7:10.

¹⁶ *Gospel Principles*, 54.

¹⁷ *Doctrine and Covenants* 19:18. Contrast with Luke 22:44.

¹⁸ *The Book of Mormon*, Helaman 14:27.

¹⁹ Talmage, James E., *Jesus the Christ*, 1990, 670–91.

²⁰ *What the Mormons Think of Christ*, 29 (author and publisher unknown).

²¹ LDS Church News, week ending June 20, 1998, 7. See also <http://carm.org/hinckleysaysmormonsbelievedifferentjesus>.

Latter-Day Saints

*I get sort of homesick sometimes
For the home I had before my birth.
For my other Father and Mother
That I left to come to earth.*

This song, “Homesick,” from an LDS musical,¹ illustrates the Latter-Day Saint teaching of preexistence. Mormons have been taught that they all lived in Heaven before being born on earth. They had to prove themselves in order to earn the right to come into this world to get a body for their spirit and embark on a pathway of eternal progression.

“I am a child of God” is a comforting teaching that is drilled into children in LDS homes. Because they think of themselves as already being children of Heavenly Father, it doesn’t make sense to them that anyone is not a child of God. They believe we all belonged to Heavenly Father up in Heaven and lived there as His spirit children.

However, the LDS church also teaches that Adam’s transgression brought death to the bodies of God’s spirit children and that the atonement can redeem all mankind from the effects of Adam’s sin. In LDS teaching, the atonement involved the shedding of Christ’s blood, bleeding from every pore in the Garden of Gethsemane, after which He died on the cross and rose again. They believe that the atonement will result in resurrection for everyone except defiant rejecters of the LDS gospel.

Not a Simple Salvation

The LDS are on a pathway of eternal progression, learning all that is necessary to return to Heavenly Father and become like Him; therefore, the LDS plan of salvation involves all that is required for man to attain salvation and exaltation with an inheritance in their highest celestial heaven. Mormon salvation involves individual and personal salvation by Christ’s saving grace through faith, based on the atonement, but it is not that simple. Consider the following LDS *Articles of Faith*:

We believe that the first principles and ordinances of the gospel are: first, Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, second, Repentance, third, Baptism by immersion for the remission of sins, fourth, Laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost. We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.²

What are “the laws and ordinances of the Gospel”? These include repentance: the sincere desire to put away sin, accepting the cleansing power of the blood of Christ offered through the waters of baptism, and receiving the Holy Ghost. They also include keeping the commandments of the Lord as taught by the LDS Church, such as tithing, faithful attendance, taking the sacrament, and participating in the temple ordinances.

Although not stated in these *Articles of Faith*, the LDS plan of salvation also involves the restoration of priesthood authority to Joseph Smith so there will be someone on earth authorized to act for God in baptizing people for the remission of sins and giving the gift of the Holy Ghost. The LDS Church teaches that there was no one on earth with this authority from the time the last apostle died until Joseph Smith. They teach that no other churches on earth have this authority today. Therefore, the fullness of the gospel for LDS consists in those laws, doctrines, ordinances, powers, and authorities that they have in their church. These are needed to enable men to gain the fullness of salvation and give people the opportunity to work out their own salvation.

There are varying beliefs among LDS about the place of grace in salvation. Some will say that in the end we all are completely dependent on Christ’s saving grace. Others will focus on our responsibility for obedience. They say that if we don’t do our part, we won’t receive His saving grace. *The Book of Mormon* says, “For we know that it is by grace we are saved after all we can do.”³ Mormon salvation is partly grace and partly works. It is a complex mixture of what they say God did through Christ, what is done through the priesthood of the church, and what they do in obedience.

Some LDS are very sincere in wanting to believe what the Bible says about Jesus and salvation. They know they need Him as their Savior and try to believe in Him with all their heart. The church is telling them that it is Christ they are trusting for salvation, but it is also stressing obedience and the priesthood to administer the saving ordinances of their gospel.

The Simple Gospel

We need to try to share the simple gospel with LDS. We understand the gospel to mean the good news that Christ died for our sins according to the Bible, was buried, and rose again the third day according to the Bible (1 Cor. 15:3, 4). In sharing the simplicity of the gospel, we need to talk about how Christ paid the full price

Mormon salvation is partly grace and partly works. It is a complex mixture of what they say God did through Christ, what is done through the priesthood of the church, and what they do in obedience.

and Salvation

John Lovegrove



to save us from all our sins and to keep us out of Hell. There is nothing we can add to it. Our witnessing needs to share the finished work of Christ on the cross.

We can focus on the words of Ephesians 2:8, 9—"not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast"—and the words of Titus 3:5: "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us." Works of righteousness would include baptism and all kinds of ceremonies and ordinances that the LDS church has established. We can share our confidence that God has already saved us; salvation is not something we earn.

However, we need to be ready to agree with them about the need for Biblical repentance from our sins, or they will think that we are saying all we have to do is believe and then we can live however we want. They probably know some professing Christians who live that way.

It is also helpful to share our need to have the righteousness of Christ given to us, using verses such as 2 Corinthians 5:21: "For he hath made him to be sin for us who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him."

It is not a matter of establishing our worthiness to merit His saving grace. We come to Christ as a guilty sinner and trust in His perfect work of salvation for us. We then have the righteousness of Christ credited to us, enabling us to live in victory over sin.

We have a wonderful salvation and an all-sufficient Savior! It is good to share this with LDS and try to help them understand that they must trust in Christ alone for their salvation.

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¹ Pearson, Carol, *My Turn on Earth* (Salt Lake City: Embryo Music Company, 1977).

² Talmadge, James E., *Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1984).

³ II Nephi 25:23, *Book of Mormon*.

The New Face of Philosophy and Issues That Are Reshaping Her Image

Fifty years ago, when church planters came to the “Mormon West” with the gospel and a desire to plant churches in areas where there were few non-LDS (Latter-Day Saint) churches, they found open resistance. Many pastors and their families experienced rejection and hostility due to the gospel. In those days Mormons were adamant that they were not Christian.

This historic view of the LDS Church came from the testimony of its founding prophet, Joseph Smith. He testified of a supposed meeting with God in which he enquired as to which sect he should join, and God told him to join none of them for they were all corrupt and their creeds were an abomination. This meeting resulted in Joseph Smith’s establishing the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, which was commissioned with authority of restoring the “true gospel” to the earth. He and his followers considered themselves to be distinct from churches that were Biblically orthodox.

One of the tenets of this new church, which set it apart from orthodox Christianity, was the practice of polygamy as part of the “everlasting gospel” that Joseph Smith taught. Polygamy was abandoned by the main segment of the LDS church under President Wilford Woodruff in September of 1890—as required by the US government before Utah could become a state. The FLDS, or Fundamentalist Latter-Day Saints, still practice polygamy. There are an estimated 30,000 people in the United States who follow this full teaching of Joseph Smith. In light of the moral climate of our country today, I believe we may soon see polygamy become a legal and accepted practice again.

New Logo, New Face, Same Doctrine

The face of Mormonism began to change in the early 1990s. That change was announced by a new logo. According to an article in the *Salt Lake Tribune*, the reason for this new face was because Mormonism was not considered “Christian” by some Protestant and Catholic groups. The leadership of the LDS Church decided they wanted to emphasize the words “Jesus Christ” in their title. This move seemed to mark a new effort by the LDS to seek acceptance by Christian denominations.¹

Another area of change was seen in their missionary outreach. There are currently 141 functioning Mormon temples with fifteen under construction and an additional fourteen announced to be constructed in the future. These temples create a strong visible presence of the Mormon Church’s influence in many locations worldwide. In public

media advertisements they began offering a Bible instead of the *Book of Mormon* for those who were interested. Missionaries would affirm belief in the same doctrinal statements that a Christian would offer as a witness to them. The deceptive part of this affirmation is the fact that both Christians and Mormons use very similar terminology but with very different definitions. Missionaries would often emphasize the fact that they have the name “Jesus Christ” in the title of their church. In recent visits with LDS missionaries at our home they have tried to convince me that we basically believe the same things. The external image and rhetoric are changing, but the doctrinal teaching of the LDS Church is still a false gospel.

There are many other areas that have brought Mormonism to the forefront in US culture. The 2002 Winter Olympics held in Salt Lake City became a showcase of conservative culture and strong family values. Media voices such as Glenn Beck have rallied Christians and Mormons alike to a common conservative cause. Mormon politicians in powerful places—such as Mitt Romney, Orrin Hatch, Jon Huntsman Jr., and Harry Reid—have brought great influence to the highest offices of our country.

Mormonism and Evangelicals

A more recent evidence of this changed posture by the LDS Church is seen more directly in Utah. Brigham Young University, the educational arm of the LDS Church, has invited several nationally known Evangelicals to address various groups on campus. Dr. Al Mohler Jr., president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary; Dr. Richard Land, president of Southern Evangelical Seminary; and Dr. George O. Wood, the general superintendent of the Assemblies of God, have spoken in the last year on various subjects. Dr. Mohler’s addresses were strongly delivered with clear doctrinal distinctions between what he believes and what Mormonism teaches. At the close of his first address he said, “I do not believe that we are going to Heaven together, but I do believe we may go to jail together.”²

Another area where Evangelical influence is seen is through the efforts of an organization called Standing Together. It was founded by Rev. Greg Johnson. Standing Together has organized two large events in the last ten years, seeking to open dialogue with the LDS community. Dr. Ravi Zacharias has been the invited speaker, doing apologetic lectures at University of Utah, Weber State, and Brigham Young University, and on both occasions has spoken at the LDS Tabernacle on Temple Square in Salt Lake City. On both occasions high leadership of the LDS Church

Mormonism

Ron Ehmann

has welcomed the group and spoken favorably of this new era of friendship. On the first occasion one of the speakers, Dr. Richard Mouw, then president of Fuller Theological Seminary, ignited a firestorm of criticism when he apologized to the LDS for the misrepresentation of beliefs and unkind treatment of the LDS by Evangelicals. Several local pastors responded negatively to Mouw's caricature of them.

Greg Johnson of Standing Together and Robert Millet, professor and dean emeritus of religious education at BYU, have traveled together with a lecture series called "A Conversation between a Mormon and an Evangelical." A few years ago they co-authored a book entitled *Bridging the Divide: The Continuing Conversation between a Mormon and an Evangelical*.

These exchanges between Evangelicals and Mormons seem to be accomplishing what the LDS leadership desires: a greater acceptance by Christians. They have also produced a false perception among some that Mormon doctrine falls into the realm of Christian orthodoxy, or that Mormonism has changed its doctrinal positions. Nothing could be further from truth. Though the façade of Mormonism is apparently more tolerant and "Christian" in appearance, the heart of its doctrine is derived from a false prophet, a constantly changing revelation, a works-based salvation, and an understanding of a god who bears no resemblance to the God of the Bible.

Paul's repeated statement in Galatians 1:8, 9 stands as a strong warning to all that the gospel is a clear and simple sacred trust. Our presentation of it must be with compassion and not with compromise. We must work hard to build an open communication with these dear LDS people while giving them a well-defined gospel of the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

I would invite your prayers for the dear believers who live, love, and labor among these devoutly religious but lost people. I would invite you to come and see for yourself the spiritual needs of this great mission field of the West. I would also invite you to become a prayer and support partner in some ministry reaching Mormons with the gospel.

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¹ Stack, P. F., "Sunstone: Designer recalls history of LDS Church's 'visual identity,'" *Salt Lake Tribune* (July 27, 2012). Retrieved March 4, 2014, from <http://www.sltrib.com/sltrib/lifestyle/54575040-80/church-logo-lds-smith.html.csp>.

² Retrieved March 4, 2014, from <http://www.albertmohler.com/2013/10/21/a-clear-and-present-danger-religious-liberty-marriage-and-the-family-in-the-late-modern-age-an-address-at-brigham-young-university/>.

Diversity among

I have lived among Mormons all of my life except for my college and seminary days in South Carolina. Based on my experience, I would suggest that no two Mormons are alike. Of course, outward appearances might suggest the contrary. They walk in nice suits or long dresses to the neighborhood meeting houses on Sunday Sabbaths. They carry scriptures, and they sing hymns. Typically, everyone gathers together for the Semi-Annual General Conferences. But in reality, LDS hold to a sundry of opinions and diverse interpretations.

Amazingly Diverse

The cultural world of Mormonism is not monolithic by any stretch. In this culture you will soon discover staggering diversity.

Fundamentalist Mormons are easy to spot. They live tightly in isolated community. The women are clothed in denim jumpers and wear their long hair in buns. The men

tisms for the dead, and special endowments. The rooms are quieter and brighter the higher you go. And it appears to be that the higher one's status is in the LDS Church, the higher one's home is situated among the hills and mountains of the cities along the I-15 Interstate Corridor. Success in business is a premium.

The **Inactive Mormons** are those who are not caught up in the structure and rules of the Temple Mormons. They are on the membership rolls, but they simply don't see the necessity of attending ward meetings every Sunday nor are they interested in pursuing LDS callings. They perhaps might believe in some aspects of the teachings of the LDS religion, but they have no faithful commitment.

Internet Mormons like to explore the LDS theological frontiers. The "bloggernacle" is a venue for innovative proposals, out-of-the box dialogues, rants and raves, and broader influences of ideas. It is an opportunity to question and to challenge traditional mentalities. New ideas can be crusaded: feminism, alternative sexual orientations, and scripture interpretations outside of the regulated educational curriculum. People will spend hours upon hours online,

So if you seek to be a missionary in a city that exists under the umbrella of Mormonism, then you must be prepared to be an ambassador of reconciliation to an increasingly vocal number of those who rebel against the reality of God's existence and accountability in their lives.

have many wives. They follow the teachings of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young and strictly rebuff the ongoing onslaught of American vices. They rigidly cling to their historical texts, plural marriages, and outward righteousness, and yet many are bound by fear. Others are victims of manipulative abuse. They consider themselves as the one true church and consider the LDS headquarters in Salt Lake City to be illegitimate.

Temple Mormons are those people described as "temple worthy." They are faithful in attending their ward meetings, paying their tithes, practicing the Word of Wisdom, and fulfilling their callings. Working hard to be successful and living as examples in their neighborhoods, they strive to uphold the teachings of the Prophet and the General Authorities. Temple Mormons will wear sacred garments. For Temple Mormons, the regional LDS temple plays a central place in their drawing close to God. The temple offers a variety of services: ceremonies for eternal weddings, bap-

hashing out ideas. It is a smorgasbord of picking and choosing what seems best for each individual in making sense of the LDS Church, current events, and life's circumstances.

For **Post Mormons**, the traditional LDS theology has become somewhat of a yawn. They see too many inconsistencies. Sure, hanging out with LDS family is cool, but humorous wisecracks are lobbed in the direction of Temple Mormon family members. Internet Mormons will chuckle over these incidents, while Temple Mormons will raise the eyebrow, clear the throat in discomfort, and try to move on to another topic. Post Mormons pride themselves in living authentically, living freely, unshackled from the manipulative chains of organized religion. They might claim to be spiritual. Or they might state that they are agnostic. So it is crucial to be able to patiently live and lovingly minister among those who are steeped in the philosophies of post-modernism. Many of the young people discuss and debate from this type of worldview orientation.

The **Secular Mormons** are dogmatic. Typically steeped in atheistic arguments, they rigorously promote materialism and rationalism. They deny supernaturalism and ridicule the testimonies of blind faith. Though their minds are separated from the religious aspects of Mormonism, they will applaud the humanitarian causes of religion. A secular Mormon who has been hurt by some past experience might be caustic in conversation. Or secular Mormons might be some of the most inclusive people that you will meet on the street—that is, inclusive to all except those who are dogmatic about God and His commands.

There are a growing number of people who live and breathe within the world of cultural Mormonism but who are practical atheists. You will discover that LDS General Authorities are less concerned about the influence of Protestant churches in the Intermountain West as they are about the swelling tide of secular humanism. It is secular humanism that Authorities will contextualize as the abominable church of the end times.

So if you seek to be a missionary in a city that exists under the umbrella of Mormonism, then you must be prepared to be an ambassador of reconciliation to an increasingly vocal number of those who rebel against the reality of God's existence and accountability in their lives.

"Evangelical" Mormons are those who like having conversations with conservative Evangelicals. They like to see where they can build bridges with Evangelical ministers and respective members in their churches. Perhaps, such bridge-building might start by doing community projects together. Then it might progress to getting together for prayer and Bible study. Evangelical Mormons are not hesitant to say that they are saved by grace alone. They are not afraid to pick up a song book in your church and sing right along with you. They delight in sending their children to your local Vacation Bible School. And they love talking about the writings of C. S. Lewis.

There has been a dialogue movement going on for some time now between certain BYU instructors and Evangelical professors. (See "The New Face of Mormonism" in this issue.)

In Conclusion . . .

First of all, within cultural Mormonism, there is really no foundation. We have in America one of the most exciting mission fields wherein to point people to our Lord God who is immutable. He is the Rock. We look to God to bring a spiritual awakening. Secondly, the I-15 Interstate Corridor in the Intermountain West is a terrific place to present the Creator who can create out of nothing, the free offering of the righteousness of God through the work of Christ, and the total assurance that redeemed sinners are kept by the power of God. Wherever one turns, there is opportunity to share and live out God's amazing grace. And lastly, be careful not to put in a box or broad brush anyone whom you might seek to witness to in the diverse world of cultural Mormonism. Ask sincere questions to each individual to find where he personally is in his relationship with the Creator God and then apply the glorious gospel.



Todd Wood has served as pastor of Berean Baptist Church in Idaho Falls, Idaho, since 1997. His favorite passage in the Bible is Isaiah 61:1–3.



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A View of Mormon Sunday Culture

We attended an LDS church service recently. Taking a short vacation over a Sunday enabled us to make a field trip, mostly incognito, to an LDS ward meeting in a town some distance from our home. Because the Mormon Church operates according to standard operating manuals, all ward meetings worldwide would be very similar. As we were to find out, the manuals are pretty much the focal point of all that goes on within those spired buildings.

High Priesthood and Relief Society Meetings

As we entered the church building, my wife and I were struck by the immaculate way in which the building was furnished and maintained. Ah, a good lesson for those churches trying to reach Mormons with the authentic gospel of Christ. LDS folk will probably not be impressed with run-down and poorly maintained buildings.

My wife and I split up for the first session. I was directed to the High (Melchizedek) Priesthood meeting. For an hour a counselor to the bishop of the ward spoke of concerns the bishop wanted passed down to the male leadership. Lack of reverence during the sacrament service was one item addressed and problems within the lower (Aaronic) Priesthood was another, although the problems were unspecified. I was a little uncomfortable with the scolding these men were getting, but they all seemed to take it in stride. There was kind of an odd mention that spies from another religion were going to come and observe their services. A discussion of the Priesthood manual followed, where it became apparent that all in the room were not in agreement with the interpretation of the manual concerning what they could and could not do as Melchizedek priests. I did find it interesting that no Scripture of any sort was used during this session. Rather, it was all about the rulebook and pressure to make things look right.

My wife spent the corresponding hour with the women in what is called Relief Society. The stated purpose of this auxiliary is to “prepare women for the blessings of eternal life by helping them increase their faith and personal righteousness, strengthen families and homes, and help those

in need.” The hour began with rehearsing the history of the organization, which honored the pioneer women who initiated it. On a marker board were written various practical service projects they could do which would “increase their faith and personal righteousness.” It seemed to my wife that they were saying their spiritual destiny depended on these good works.

Sunday School and Sacrament Meeting

Hour two began with me joining my wife for Sunday school, a mixed class of sixty or so adults, which was taught by a very well-groomed seventy-ish female. A small picture of a young pioneer woman was displayed in front of the lectern, while a sign reading “The Promised Land” was displayed on the wall behind. As the lesson began, our teacher asked, “Who was told they were to go to a promised land?” I thought of an answer in Biblical terms, but that was not the right answer that day. Many hands shot up, and almost in unison the response was, “The Mormon pioneers!” The rest of the lesson was comprised of pre-appointed people reading excerpts of journals of various pioneers written as they trekked from Independence, Missouri, to Salt Lake City, Utah. Again, there was a conspicuous lack of Scripture—only inspirational stories of the hardy folks who paid such a heavy price to come West.

Our final hour found us in the big room called the “chapel” for what is known as the Sacrament Meeting. The elements used for this weekly observance are water and bread. You can draw your own conclusions as to the symbolism, or lack thereof, related to this. Before distribution, prayers are recited verbatim. For the water, the prayer is found in *Doctrine and Covenants* 20:79. Not surprisingly they substitute the word “water” for “wine,” which is found in the text. The prayers must be recited word-perfect, or the entire prayer must be repeated. Again, the rule book seemed to be prominent in this observance.

Local ward business was also conducted during this meeting, consisting mostly of people being called to or released from various jobs within the church. No dissenting voices were heard that day because dissension is some-

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SOUND WORDS

HOLD FAST THE FORM OF SOUND WORDS—2 TIMOTHY 1:13

First Partaker

Blameless

This last Sunday night it happened again, just as it has many times over the years. A college student approached, asking to get together to talk about something weighing on his mind for many months now. Last summer he and I talked for several hours about the pressing issue of what constitutes a divine call to the ministry. Ever since then he's been watchful for indications in his own life. Needless to say, if he's being called, I'd be thrilled!

But there are certain things which I never feel that I'm in a position to answer for another man wrestling with this issue. Were it merely a question of formulas, of constructing a kind of preacher's paradigm, one might feel more confident about saying, *I feel certain that you're called to preach. You fit the mold.*

But, of course, this question cannot be decided by that kind of cool calculation. In my estimation David Martyn Lloyd-Jones cautioned rightly, *A preacher is not a Christian who decides to preach.*¹ In other words, this isn't a field into which a devoted Christian man enters by mere personal analysis. That may be something of the case with other occupations. *If a young man has capacity, wrote John Newton, culture and application may make him a scholar, a philosopher, or an orator.* But does anyone dare say that about entering the ministry? *Apply yourself diligently, my brother. You can turn yourself into a preacher!* I don't think so.

A true minister, continued Newton, must have certain principles, motives, feelings, and aims, which no industry or endeavours of men can either acquire or communicate. They must be given from above, or they cannot be received. Newton concluded memorably, *None but He who made the world can make a minister of the Gospel.*²

That doesn't mean, however, that we're left without any standards for assessment. The lists of qualifications in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 are those kinds of filters. If we have anything approaching a non-negotiable formula, it's to be found in those two lists. That seems to be underscored emphatically by the fact that in both lists the Holy Spirit employs the impersonal verb of necessity, *dei*: *A bishop must be . . .* (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:7). What follow are around two dozen separate necessities for any man to whom the church entrusts its spiritual leadership.

It may be surprising, but actually, it isn't necessary that churches have outstanding preachers. Preachers, yes. But not necessarily the best and greatest.

Churches can't insist that their teachers be as skilled as a G. Campbell Morgan or as pastoral as a Richard Baxter. But they not only can, they *must* withhold ministerial appointment to the *office of an overseer*, unless men are qualified. There is a door into this sheepfold, and it opens on the hinges of these two lists of necessities.

Categories

Though there do not seem to be clear categories into which the qualifications fall naturally, point by successive point, they do cluster in certain ways. Two of these clusters can be further subdivided fairly obviously. Consider the following possibilities.

In General, a minister must be . . .
blameless (1 Timothy, Titus).

In Character (the largest category), a minister must be . . .

Positively:

vigilant (1 Timothy)
sober (1 Timothy, Titus)
of good behavior (1 Timothy)
patient (1 Timothy)
just (Titus)

"The husbandman that laboureth must be first partaker of the fruits"
(2 Tim. 2:6)

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holy (Titus)
temperate (Titus)

Negatively:

not given to wine (1 Timothy, Titus)
not greedy of filthy lucre (1 Timothy, Titus)
not covetous (1 Timothy)
not self-willed (Titus)
not soon angry (Titus)

In Relationships (the category most related to a minister's shepherding), a minister must be . . .

In the home:

husband of one wife (1 Timothy, Titus)
one that ruleth well his own house (1 Timothy)
having his children in subjection with all gravity (1 Timothy)
having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly (Titus)

In the church:

given to hospitality (1 Timothy, Titus)
no striker (1 Timothy, Titus)
not a brawler (1 Timothy)
a lover of good men (Titus)

In the world:

a good report of them which are without (1 Timothy)

In Abilities (the category most related to a minister's preaching/teaching), a minister must be . . .

apt to teach (1 Timothy)
holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught (Titus)
able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers (Titus)

In Christian Experience, a minister must be . . .

not a novice (1 Timothy)

Character, relationships, ability, and experience. These categories, though not entirely exclusive of one another, are nevertheless distinct divisions. But previous to any of them is a category containing just one qualification, which might be called *General*. And here's my concern, both for myself and for anyone whom I counsel about this matter of entering the ministry. For the very reason that this qualification is *general*, it may be largely overlooked. We may not think very deeply about it at all. Thoughtlessly, *general* may become something like *incidental* or even *minimal*. When actually, the one qualification which ought to be written in the largest and boldest font is this one: *blameless*! Here's a case in point.

Some eighty years after George Whitefield's death (in 1770), Isaac Taylor, an English historian, wrote, *And now is it not time that the world should deal righteously with itself as to its ancient quarrel with one like Whitefield? The world has a long score to settle in this behalf, for it pursued him, from first to last, with a fixed and furious malignity. But then Taylor threw down the gauntlet, No one can dare to say that his life was not blameless.*³

When it came to his preaching gifts, Whitefield is regarded by nearly all subsequent judges of preaching to have been almost one of a kind, a giant among even other exceptional preachers. It's almost impossible to think of anyone in the same towering category with him. But Taylor put his finger upon the dimension of Whitefield's life and ministry which, nearly a century after his death, remained the most clinching of all for confirming his being a man of God: the evangelist's *blameless* life. That ought to serve as a standing lesson for churches assessing their leaders. It illustrates powerfully why both lists of qualifications begin as they do.

The Foundational Necessity

Even cursory thought confirms rather quickly that the lists don't begin with this demand merely to prioritize it numerically—that is, in order to say, *This is first*, like one would say, *You take this up first of all, and then you move on to the next thing, and then to what is third, and so on.*

It's apparent that this qualification is foundational. That is, it is the thing upon which the other qualifications stand. Or to put it another way, it is the qualification which qualifies all the others. Or to put it still differently, it is the qualification which is to pervade the entire list. What does that mean? Well, it means that a minister is to be blameless with respect to every other qualification under consideration. His marriage? *Blameless*. His governance of his children? *Blameless*. His spirit about money? *Blameless*. And so on.

But how can this be? It sounds like a man would have to be perfect, without flaws, actually sinless. Who can begin to meet that standard? It's impossible. *If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?* (Ps. 130:3).

This is the single most critical question that has to be answered when it comes to applying the qualifications. Perhaps especially by men who are already in the ministry, but whose lives are pretty clearly less than exemplary in some way. When should it be concluded, gut-wrenching as it may be, that a man, at least at this time, simply isn't eligible for further ministry as a pastor?

In attempting to answer this sobering question one can err by concluding either one of two extremes. On the one hand, we can set the bar so high that no one could possibly meet its expectations. On the other, we can unduly relax the demand and fill pulpits with men to whose failures we must constantly be turning a blind eye. But of the two errors, which is our tendency?

Throughout the long history of the Church, it has been the latter. This has been true even from the beginning. The letters of 1 Peter and Jude, and some of those to the seven churches (Rev. 2–3) reflect this. And it could be demonstrated easily that, regardless of denomination, this has been a glaring, repeated mistake ever since.

Take, for instance, the situation in Germany little more than a century after Luther. Philip Spener, pastor of the evangelical Lutheran church in Frankfurt, wrote

an anguished call for ministerial and church reform. He felt constrained to say of many evangelical ministers (not Roman Catholic, but *evangelical* ministers), *Although, according to the common estimate of men and as seen through eyes captivated by the fashion of the world, they may seem to be blameless, yet their lives reflect (subtly, to be sure, but none the less plainly) a worldly spirit, marked by carnal pleasure, lust of the eye, and arrogant behavior.* Spenser did not exclude himself from indictment. *On the contrary, I recognize more and more how deficient I myself am, and I am prepared to be fraternally corrected by others. Indeed, nothing grieves me more than this: that I can hardly see how, in the face of such frightful corruption, such a one as I am can possibly recover a good conscience.*⁴

Or to give another illustration, look at the situation just previous to the English evangelical awakening. John Wesley knew that he would probably never again be asked to preach before the faculty and student body of his alma mater at Oxford after he had asked the teachers and administrators pointedly,

Have not pride and haughtiness of spirit, impatience and peevishness, sloth and indolence, gluttony and sensuality, and even a proverbial uselessness, been objected to us, perhaps not always by our enemies, nor wholly without ground? . . . Are we then patterns to the rest, “in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity”? (1 Timothy 4:12.) Is there written on our forehead and on our heart, “Holiness to the Lord”?⁵

Or take the chief concerns of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church when it founded Princeton Seminary. The committee bringing the official proposal for founding a seminary cautioned, *Filling the church with a learned and able ministry, without a corresponding portion of real piety, would be a curse to the world, and an offence to God and his people.* The proposal, therefore, was that the new institution be *under the blessing of God, a nursery of vital piety, as well as of sound theological learning.*⁶ There was a troubled background to this emphasis upon *vital piety* created, in part, by the departure from high spiritual and ethical standards within existing institutions training men for ministry, particularly Yale and Harvard.

The point of these examples is to note that historically, it has not been the Church’s tendency to err in the direction of being too demanding of the character and conduct of its ministers. It has been the decided tendency to err to the opposite extreme.

I’m taking a little time with this deliberately. Why? Well, because it’s very possible that as soon as anyone begins to talk about a needed reformation among ministers, his efforts may be caricatured as calling for something unreasonable, unlivable, unachievable, impossible. But if so, my argument is that we have not tended, either historically or at the present time, to err very far in that direction. In fact, there may be today a lower expectation of ministerial character and conduct than at any time in recent history. Some of the lifestyle

choices of pastors and preachers today that are not just tolerated but championed are appalling. But they’re waved off as being refreshing marks of transparency. At least I’m genuine, for real, not a legalistic hypocrite. I’m a normal sinner you can identify with.

This is antagonism to accountability masquerading thinly as authenticity. *To bear with the vices of the ministers is to promote the ruin of the Church*, warned Richard Baxter.⁷ In the case of many churches, we are rapidly approaching that very possibility. And it is due in the largest part not to the pressures of the culture nor to the irresistible power of demons, but to the lower and lower standards of expectation for ministerial character and conduct. If we do not bring the bar back up to where the Holy Spirit positioned it from the very beginning, it is certain that we will grossly damage the character of our churches, perhaps in many cases irremediably. The bar is set at *blameless*. Let’s, therefore, look at this standard of *blamelessness* much more closely, and without any predisposition to dilution.

Churches can’t insist that their teachers be as skilled as a G. Campbell Morgan or as pastoral as a Richard Baxter. But they not only can, they must withhold ministerial appointment to the office of an overseer, unless men are qualified.

Two Words

The Holy Spirit has chosen to employ two different words for this characteristic, each of which sounds its own distinctive note. The word used in 1 Timothy is quite rare, even in secular documents of the time. There are no occurrences of it in the Septuagint, and on only two other occasions does it surface in the entire New Testament. Interestingly, those two are in this same book, where it is translated *blameless* (5:7) and *unrebukeable* (6:14).

The point of noting these remarkable facts is that when it comes to understanding or even translating this word, we have almost no contextual comparatives. It’s in cases like this that a word’s etymology may have a measure of usefulness. In this instance the word’s root is the verb *to have* or *to take hold*. Then, preceding the verb is the preposition *upon*. Finally, the entire word, verb and preposition combined, is negated by its first letter, the alpha privative. That little alpha cuts the word’s meaning off at its roots. For this reason, Thayer gives as a definition, and I’m emphasizing that root-slicing alpha, *cannot be laid hold of*. R. C. Trench explains it as *affording nothing which an adversary could take hold of, on which he might ground a charge*.

What's the application of this ideal, a man who *cannot be laid hold of*? A minister who *affords nothing which might be seized upon*? Let's attend to the word employed in Titus before we attempt to settle this.

Here again we're confronted with a term used very sparingly within the New Testament. Only Paul employs it, and that just five times. Four of those it's translated *blameless* (1 Cor. 1:8; 1 Tim. 3:10; Titus 1:6, 7), and once, *unreprovable* (Col. 1:22). Again we do well to look at the word's etymology.

But there ought be nothing so glaringly contradictory to his calling that they could not say, *In our judgment, our minister's life, publicly and privately, cannot really be called into question. When it comes right down to it, he's a blameless man.*

The root verb is *to call*. The little preposition, *in*, precedes that verb, and as with the word in 1 Timothy, the alpha privative negates the entire idea. *Not called in* is a translation that reflects all the nuances. Someone has put it (and again I'm emphasizing the alpha privative) **cannot be called to account**. The *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* confirms this idea when it states, *In cl.Gk. from Plato onwards it means a person or thing against which no accusation can be made* (III, 923).

This is immensely significant. The point seems to be that a man is so free from faults that not only could he defend himself if accused, but that actually, he would never even be called into question. Trench has a very helpful comment upon this, and I'd like to quote him in full because of his reference to the application of this concept during the actual ordination ceremony of candidates for the ministry within the Church of England. The bold emphasis is mine.

It is justly explained by Chrysostom as implying not acquittal merely, but **absence so much as of a charge or accusation brought against him** of whom it is affirmed. . . . There is a manifest allusion to a custom which still survives in our Ordinations, at the opening of which the ordaining Bishop demands of the faithful present whether they know any notable crime or charge for the which those who have been presented to him for Holy Orders ought not to be ordained; he demands, in other words, whether they be *anegklētoi*, that is, **not merely unaccusable, but unaccused**; not merely free from any just charge, for that question is reserved, if need be, for later investigation, but

free from any charge at all—the intention of this citation being, that if any present had such a charge to bring, the ordination should not go forward until this had been duly sifted (1 Tim. iii.10).⁸

Clarifications

Obviously, this cannot be pressed to the extreme of requiring sinlessness, either privately or publicly. *In many things we offend all*, the Scripture concedes (James 3:2). That is, we all stumble, even the best of preachers. Nor is any and every accuser credible. Some people are born in the objective case and live in the kickative mood. Others are malignant slanderers whose tongues are *set on fire of hell* (James 3:6). Satan is the arch-accuser of the brethren (Rev. 12:10), and he walketh about seeking whom he may employ. But, nevertheless, men in ministry need unquestionable, personal credibility.

Good people are reasonable people. They're quick to pardon involuntary failings, unavoidable infirmities, quirks of personality, and even the occasional transgression. They appreciate and are inspired by a pastor who can admit that he's been wrong, can ask forgiveness, can repent, can recover from failure. These kinds of admissions and changes actually enhance his spiritual credibility in their eyes. But there ought be nothing so glaringly contradictory to his calling that they could not say, *In our judgment, our minister's life, publicly and privately, cannot really be called into question. When it comes right down to it, he's a blameless man.*

If we find ourselves convicted, then one of Richard Baxter's counsels becomes our friend (*Faithful are the wounds of a friend*). Baxter urged, *It is no time now to stand upon our credit, so far as to neglect our duty and befriend our sins*, he cautioned. *It rather beseems us to fall down at the feet of our offended Lord, and to justify Him in his judgments, and freely and penitently to confess our transgressions, and to resolve upon a speedy and thorough reformation.*⁹

We have a great High Priest. He reigns from a throne of grace. He knows our frame, that we are but dust. He pardons our iniquities and cleanses white as snow. Praise the Lord! But that being the case, let's get back up and go, *and sin no more*. ☞

¹ *Preaching and Preachers*, 103.

² *The Works of John Newton*, V, 62.

³ *Wesley and Methodism*, 108.

⁴ *Pia Desideria, or Heartfelt Desire for a God-Pleasing Reform of the True Evangelical Church*.

⁵ "Scriptural Christianity," preached before the University at St. Mary's, Oxford, August 24, 1744.

⁶ From the proposal submitted by committee to the General Assembly in May 1810.

⁷ *The Reformed Pastor*, Preface.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 381.

⁹ *Ibid.*, Preface.

Bring . . . the Books

Reasoning from the Scriptures with the Mormons,
Ron Rhodes

Ron Rhodes is a Dallas Theological Seminary graduate who has written over sixty books dealing with several different cults and end-time events. *Reasoning from the Scriptures* provides a detailed look at Mormonism. The book was written in 1995, but it remains an excellent tool for those interested in understanding Mormonism and evangelizing Mormons. In 2001 he also wrote *The 10 Most Important Things You Can Say to a Mormon*, a companion volume of only 128 pages.

The first chapter of the book gives a very brief but helpful history of Mormonism. In the following chapter he gives some helpful advice for witnessing to Mormons, including the importance of prayer, genuine friendship, and dependence on the Lord's work in their lives. He includes several other practical tips about the format and content of witnessing attempts. The last chapter in the book is a brief chapter of additional witnessing helps adapted from Dr. Walter Martin.

The meat of the book is in chapters 3 through 20, and most of the chapters follow a similar format. Mormon teaching is presented, documented, and then Bible texts are explained from a Biblical hermeneutic. Suggested questions are provided for the evangelist to ask with well-supported answers and explanations.

Rhodes writes, "In recent years, the Mormon church has softened its stance on this claim [of being the one true church]. Indeed, some Mormon leaders are now denying that Mormonism has the harsh view of orthodox Christianity for which it is known." Since the book was written in 1995, the LDS Church has indeed deviated from its historical "one true church" position. Many Mormons now truly believe that they are Christians because that is what they have been told. However, they do not generally have an understanding of the differences between traditional Christianity and historical Mormonism.

Rhodes does the evangelist a favor by using the Bible as the main source for persuasion rather than LDS sources or even human reasoning. This is an important principle because of the power of God's Word. Since it is living and powerful (Heb. 4:12) and because it will accomplish what God wants it to accomplish (Isa. 55:11), the Bible is the most effective tool that the evangelist has. Even though chapters 5 and 6 are primarily focused on undermining the Mormon's confidence in *The Book of Mormon*, the author adds importantly, "You will also want to show the Mormon why he or she should trust the Bible. The next four chapters will help you accomplish this."

Mormons readily accept as fact the LDS Church's claim that the Bible is unreliable because it has been translated so many times. Chapters 7 through 10 give an excellent presentation of the inspiration, inerrancy, authority, and reliability of the Bible. The book also includes a very helpful chapter on Biblical hermeneu-

tics. This section is well worth the read for every Christian regardless of his interaction with Mormons.

In other chapters, Rhodes deals with questions. Do the Mormons hold the Melchizedekian priesthood today? Does the "stick of Joseph" in Ezekiel 37 refer to the *Book of Mormon*? Did ancient Israelites migrate to the United States and become known as the Lamanites and Nephites? Were these Nephites the "other sheep" in John 10:16? Do we each exist as spirit children prior to our physical birth?

The last four chapters of this "meaty section" give a detailed explanation of the Mormon plan of salvation. It is here that you will learn about the Mormon baptism and church membership, the necessity of achieving worthiness through good works, faithfulness to follow the dietary laws in the *Word of Wisdom*, and temple works like baptism for the dead and eternal marriage. He points out the differences in meaning of many words associated with salvation. Atonement, repentance, grace, and forgiveness are each understood very differently from the traditional Christian meanings. This section concludes with an explanation of the Mormon belief of three levels of Heaven. He then walks the reader through the Biblical teaching that everyone spends eternity in either Heaven or Hell.

Rhodes insists that only the King James Version be used in Mormon evangelism. Anything else would have been a stumbling block in previous decades, but using a reliable modern translation of the Bible does not seem to hinder ministry to Mormons today. Clarity is critical when communicating Biblical truth to Mormons. Also, Rhodes spends only one chapter on the person of Jesus Christ. While he accurately refutes the LDS claims about who Christ is, it would be helpful if the Biblical picture of Christ were more clearly presented.

Frequently, the author includes very helpful notes and "possible Mormon comebacks" to prepare the evangelist. It is well-referenced throughout—an important point in persuading Mormons. Rhodes provides documentation from LDS sources as well as helpful cross-references to other apologetic tools. The book also includes a helpful subject index and Scripture index at the conclusion (not included with the electronic edition).

Over the course of twenty years of ministry among the Mormons, it has been my joy to share many of the truths contained in this book. Many have not yet made any apparent decision to turn from Mormonism to Christ. Happily, many others have. ☞

*"... when
thou comest,
bring with thee
... the books"
(2 Tim. 4:13)*

Greg Wright planted Westside Baptist Church in St. George, Utah, and has pastored there since 1993.

In a sweeping declaration, Jesus taught, “Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matt. 5:48). Plucked right from the Sermon on the Mount by our Lord Jesus Christ, this text is woven into the fabric of Latter-Day Saints (LDS) scripture and culture: “Therefore I would that ye should be perfect even as I, or your Father who is in heaven is perfect” (3 Nephi 12:48).

Joseph Smith communicated that perfection is achievable; he conveyed that if you are able to start from the bottom and climb a ladder, then you are able to make the arduous ascent that leads to perfection. Joseph’s teachings had fertile soil among the groups of religious hearers who had already been oriented to a Wesleyan belief in perfection. But LDS leaders took doctrine outside the bounds of evangelical theology by making attractive once again the beliefs of Pelagius—the human spirit born in innocence has no limits in what can be achieved.

Brigham Young brazenly wrote, “When we use the term perfection, it applies to man in his present condition, as well as to heavenly beings. We are now, or may be, as perfect in our sphere as God and angels are in theirs, but the greatest intelligence in existence can continually ascend to greater heights of perfection” (John A. Widtsoe, ed., *Discourses of Brigham Young* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1954], 89). According to Young, reaching higher and higher states of perfection never ends.

So what do the modern LDS Apostles in Salt Lake City say? Here are snapshots of thought from three of them.

David A. Bednar emphasizes that it is possible to reach perfection in this life: “For disciples of Jesus Christ, the journey of mortality proceeds along the pathway to perfection. The Savior’s Atonement strengthens and enables us to press forward with steadfastness and perseverance. Our limited mortal capacity can be enlarged to meet the requirements of the divine injunction—‘Be ye therefore perfect’ (Matthew 5:48)” (*Power to Become* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 2014], 13).

Boyd K. Packer puts perfection in steps: “A missionary in Denmark asked me a question: ‘I am striving for perfection. Some of the other missionaries [have] said, “You are foolish; you can’t really be perfect.” What do you believe?’ I told him I believe the scriptures when they say: ‘Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.’ Then I humbly admitted that I was perfect in some things. I am perfect when it comes to never touching tobacco, never; alcohol, never; tea and coffee, never. I am perfect there. Now there are many things where I am not perfect yet, but


I am perfect if it comes to not committing murder. I have never done that. I will never do that. We can be perfect, a little bit at a time” (*Mine Errand from the Lord: Selections from the Sermons and Writings of Boyd K. Packer* [Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 2008], 83, 162–63).

Russell M. Nelson takes a slightly different approach by projecting the hope of LDS perfection into the distant future: “In Matthew 5:48, the term perfect was translated from the Greek *teleios*, which means ‘complete.’ *Teleios* is an adjective derived from the noun *telos*, which means ‘end.’ The infinitive form of the verb is *teleiono*, which means ‘to reach a distant end, to be fully developed, to consummate, or to finish.’ Please note that the word does not imply ‘freedom from error’; it implies ‘achieving a distant objective.’ In fact, when writers of the Greek New Testament wished to describe perfection of behavior—precision or excellence of human effort—they did not employ a form of *teleios*; instead, they chose different words. . . . *Telios* is not a stranger to us. From it comes the prefix *tele-* that we use every day. Telephone literally means ‘distant talk.’ Television means ‘to see distantly.’ Telephoto means ‘distant light,’ and so on” (“Perfection Pending,” *Ensign*, November 1995, 86–88).

Any way that the LDS General Authorities slice the meaning, it basically comes down to this belief: you have the potential, and, as they would say, through the help of Jesus, to become perfect. And in the celestial realm, these are they who are gods.

Both the exegesis of Martyn Lloyd-Jones and D. A. Carson have been helpful to me in studying Christ’s Sermon on the Mount. Christ’s words in Matthew 5:48 were not given to stir within our hearts the desire to reach our potential. Through the conviction of the Holy Spirit, those words were like a sharp knife cutting into my heart and exposing my spiritual bankruptcy. Jesus’ words reveal my inability, break me of self-reliance, and drive me to His grace alone. I desperately needed a perfect righteousness imputed to me that I could and cannot arrive at through my efforts.

Of the missionaries to the LDS, I believe Mark Cares is at the forefront of using Matthew 5:48 in evangelistic outreach; I encourage you to investigate his ministry (Truth in Love Ministries).

The command by Christ is to be as perfect as God the Father. Do not in any way soften the intensity of this command. Let the words of Matthew 5:48 drive people to a helpless state in their souls. And then preach the good news. There is one way to be perfect: Christ Alone. 

“Rightly
dividing
the Word
of Truth”
(2 Tim. 2:15)

Todd Wood has served as pastor of Berean Baptist Church in Idaho Falls, Idaho, since 1997.

Windows

Marvelous Grace of Our Loving Lord: Case Studies in Mormon Conversion

Below are two true-life stories of how God graciously rescued people out of Mormonism.

Cary—Devout and Distraught (“A friend loveth at all times,” Prov. 17:17)

Devout, sincere, convinced: these are the terms that one might use to describe Cary as a young woman in the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter-Day Saints. Cary went to every church meeting and performed all of the religious tasks that she was asked to perform, without question. She even attended the religious training institution of the LDS Church: Brigham Young University. She believed with every fiber of her being that Joseph Smith was a true prophet, and she believed that the LDS Church was the most nearly correct church on the face of the earth. In her mind, all other churches were an abomination. This approach to her faith was not new to Cary or her family; they were sixth-generation Mormons.

Over the course of several years, the Lord brought people into Cary’s life that He used to chip away at her devotion to the LDS Church. The first person that God used was Cary’s older brother, who was a professor at Davidson College in North Carolina. Through a study of the history of the LDS Church, Cary’s brother had come to realize that the Mormon Church was not what it claimed to be. He got in touch with Cary and began to share with her some of the things that he had been learning. Of the resources that Cary was exposed to, the one that made the biggest impact on her thinking was the book *Mormonism: Shadow or Reality?* by Jerald and Sandra Tanner. Cary learned of the lies within the Mormon Church. It was at this point that her unquestioning allegiance to the LDS Church faded. However, she did not share this loss of belief in the LDS Church with anyone, as the thought of leaving Mormonism was unfathomable to her. It was during this time that two overwhelming questions dominated her thinking. First, “What would my family and friends think if they were to learn of my departure from the LDS faith?” Second, “Why would God do such a thing to me as to lead me in the wrong direction for all these years?”

These two questions were not enough to overrule the truth that Cary had been exposed to, and she soon realized that there were consequences for the decisions she was making. The next several years of her life were difficult ones; the difficulty was only amplified by the fact that her spiritual life had no foundation. She no longer believed the LDS Church was true, but she had

not officially left the Mormon Church because she was unsure of the repercussions of that move.

It was in some of her darkest days that God sent the next key person into Cary’s life. Her husband had left her, and as a single mother she was desperately trying to keep her family functioning. Paul, a friend and coworker of Cary’s brother, had trusted

Christ for salvation while he was working at Davidson College. Paul had since left his position at the college and was now working near where Cary was living. Paul had heard from Cary’s brother that she was struggling, and the Lord burdened Paul’s heart to reach out to her. So Paul contacted Cary with a desire to share the truth of the Biblical Jesus Christ with her. Cary wanted to know what the most important thing in his life was. Paul replied that it was not a thing, but rather a person—Jesus Christ. At that moment a troubling thought entered Cary’s mind. She thought, “He must be one of those ‘Jesus Freaks’ I have heard about. I’d better get him out of my house as quickly as possible!”

But Paul was unwavering and persistent in his concern for Cary. He was new in his own walk with the Lord, but he knew that it was important for Cary to attend a church that clearly and faithfully taught the Bible. As she was exposed to the powerful truths of God’s Word, she realized that she was guilty of sinning against God and that she had no righteousness of her own. Late one night, in November of 1975, she knelt by her couch and asked the Lord to forgive her and to give her the righteousness that comes only through the finished work of Christ on the cross. She knew that in that instant, the burden of her sin was removed as she accepted God’s free gift of salvation. The words of Augustus Toplady’s hymn “Rock of Ages” express Cary’s prayer to the Lord, “Nothing in my hands I bring, simply to Thy cross I cling.”

Sometime later, Cary formally left the LDS Church, but it was not without much turmoil and hardship. She wrote a letter to her local authority stating her intentions. The letter was not well received, and she was told that this was not acceptable. This local authority felt it necessary to bring in the next level of church leadership to meet with Cary. They came in as a group in an attempt to dissuade her. This group of church leaders was unsuccessful in their efforts to keep Cary from leaving the church even though they told her that she was risking everything by doing so. Upon realizing that they

“To every preacher of righteousness as well as to Noah, wisdom gives the command, ‘A window shalt thou make in the ark.’”

Charles Spurgeon

could not convince her, they told her that she would not only need a letter for herself but also for each of her children. It took a total of five years to undo the indoctrination that plagued her thinking. On one particular occasion after she had come to Christ, she was shocked and dismayed to learn that she did not, in fact, have spirit parents in what the Mormon Church refers to as "The Preexistence."

Cary is now a vital part of Kaysville Bible Church in northern Utah. Cary and Paul were married some time later, and their children have come to know Christ as Savior. By God's grace, Paul and Cary have seen God bring about a complete transformation in their family legacy. Cary's legacy is no longer more generations of LDS family, but three generations of believers. Cary now takes every opportunity she has to share the truth of God's Word with her LDS family, friends, and neighbors.

By God's grace, Paul and Cary have seen God bring about a complete transformation in their family legacy.

Phil—The Truth Seeker ("What is truth?" John 18:38)

How would you respond if someone walked into your church service and tried to disprove the message and invalidate the church? This is exactly what took place one Sunday evening when Phil attended a Bible-expositing church for the first time. A friend of his had contacted him to see if he would like to go to a Bible church in order to critique what they were teaching. Phil was passionate about the truth, and he believed that his understanding and background in the Mormon Church were unassailable. He had been born into a family that was committed to the Mormon Church. He was raised to follow the tenets of the LDS Church even if his understanding of the core doctrines was shallow. He believed that the truth was worth pursuing and that the truth was in his favor.

However, during that Sunday evening service, as he sat near the back and listened to what was being preached from the Bible, something unexpected happened. Phil thought he was going to be able to tear apart the things he heard. Instead, the truth coming from the Word of God was penetrating the intellectual fortress he had constructed. He continued to attend in the coming weeks, and from the exterior it appeared that he was just as resolute as ever. As Phil was exposed to more of God's truth, his defenses weakened, and he began to realize that what he had been taught by

the Mormon authorities was not infallible. At the same time he found that the Bible was not the self-contradicting book he had been told it was. In addition to this, the people who believed in the Bible alone were not the vile miscreants they had been made out to be. In fact, the people who attended the evening services where the Bible was taught were genuinely loving and compassionate.

The weight of what was happening to Phil was immense. All at once, his lifetime belief in the doctrines of the LDS Church and the prophetic office of Joseph Smith were crumbling, and his newfound understanding of the Bible was growing. Phil was now facing a piercing question: "How can I reconcile the discrepancies that exist between LDS doctrine and Biblical doctrine?" Either the Bible was false or the *Book of Mormon* was false. His God-given passion for the truth drove him further into the Bible and further away from the *Book of Mormon* and its companion volumes. Interestingly, as the inner struggle increased, so did Phil's outward defense of his Mormon religion. With each new question came an even greater desire to prove that he had not been wrong for all of these years. One day, everything changed.

In May of 1989, at the age of seventy-four, Phil came to know the Lord as his personal Savior. He left the Mormon Church on August 4, 1991, and joined Kaysville Bible Church. His passion for truth flourished. He was fond of pointing out the profound question that Pilate asked in John 18:38: "What is truth?" For Phil, the answer to this question was worth giving up everything. In a letter that Phil wrote to his family and friends, all of whom were entrenched in the Mormon Church, he posed another powerful question: "What shall we do with Christ?"

In this same letter, Phil listed his own personal articles of faith for his family to read. The first in the list is, "I believe the Bible to be the Word of God without reservations or special conditions." Once Phil came to understand this foundational reality, his pursuit of truth took on a whole new meaning. There was no longer anything to fear in this pursuit because the truth was a person—Jesus Christ.

Phil went from being a questioning critic to a convinced disciple. People who knew him well have remarked that he lived his life on purpose, and his purpose was to bring glory to God. His departure from the Mormon Church sent shockwaves through his family and through the community. It was strange enough for a prominent figure in a Mormon stronghold town to leave the church, but to leave at the age of seventy-four was unheard of. To this day, most of Phil's family is strongly opposed to anything that counters the teachings of the LDS Church. In spite of this, the legacy of one man who was saved by the grace of God out of a system of works lives on today. Phil went to be with his Savior on January 10, 2005. ☞

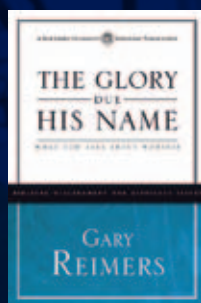
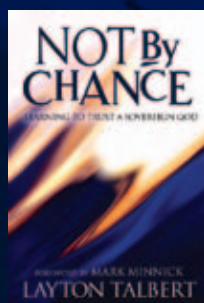
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LDS Friendship

Nearly every salvation testimony I've heard from former LDS Church members contains one of the following phrases: "I had a Christian friend . . .," or "A Christian was really nice to me." Far too often well-meaning Christians alienate LDS people with a confrontational approach that merely affirms stereotypes perpetuated by LDS folklore. Christian kindness is an essential ingredient to winning LDS individuals.

I can hear the question now: "Shouldn't theological differences be confronted?!" Yes, in due time. Unfortunately, born-again believers are often too eager to win a theological argument, too insecure to enter a genuine conversation, or too ignorant about the LDS worldview to witness effectively.

So how does the Christian demonstrate Christlike compassion, build redemptive friendships, and enter a meaningful conversation with an LDS friend? Well, I'm not going to lie—it's complicated. And it takes time—lots and lots of time. Here are four points I rehearse regularly.

Accept That the LDS Worldview Is Different

Orthodox, Protestant Christianity assumes certain worldview realities: Biblical authority in all matters of faith and practice; historical accuracy as a prerequisite for divine revelation; Scripture's plain sense; Biblical translation governed by normal linguistic practices; God has only ever been God; grace, by definition, cannot be earned; the necessity of a trained clergy; the need for theological coherence; the paramount place of an individual's theology; and

I could fill up my word allotment just highlighting these base-level convictions. Not only will your LDS friend reject all of the above, but he will immediately recognize them as constitutionally opposed to his own belief system. So fundamental are these differences that we must accept that LDS people possess a different worldview altogether.

Once the Christian accepts this sobering reality, he can begin demonstrating the weaknesses in the LDS system. Here's the encouraging part—simple kindness from Christian to Mormon attacks a cornerstone of LDS faith: exclusivity. LDS people believe they alone possess the restored gospel, the true priesthood, and the keys to happiness, morality, and faith. Yet when LDS people are confronted with a Christian who graciously understands LDS doctrine, it waylays their worldview. Mormons alone possess priesthood authority, not you. You're supposed to be an obnoxious know-it-all who speaks confrontationally and utters all sorts of blasphemy about Joseph Smith. Simple kindness undercuts the LDS claim to exclusivity.

Appeal to Emotional Dissonance

LDS people almost uniformly experience intense personal doubts about Mormon history and theology. Every LDS friend of mine has admitted to these doubts and has chosen one of three paths. (1) Leave the church, usually to a form of Deism. (2) Stay in the church on paper but disconnect for all intents and purposes—we call these "Jack Mormons." (3) Bury those doubts and use involvement in the LDS Church to repress nagging uncertainties. People in the third category are ripe for conversion.

Your LDS friend might put on a brave face in front of a gentile (that's you!), but it's a mask. In fact, LDS leaders teach not to pursue doubts, not to think too hard about them, but to trust that Heavenly Father will work it all out in the end. These breezy platitudes ineffectually whitewash genuine concerns: they demand an unreasonable leap of faith that presumes on the Heavenly Father they purport to worship. Yet, you can tap those doubts with lovingly worded questions like, "Does it bother you that . . . ?" or "I'm curious, how would the LDS Church reconcile . . . ?"

The most effective emotional query in your arsenal demands a little insider knowledge. Every two years LDS people are required to attend a "Worthiness Interview" with their Bishop and Stake President to determine whether they can enter a temple. The two most important questions you can ask are as follows: "At your last Worthiness Interview, did you get the Temple Recommend?" After he recovers from his amazement that you, an outsider, know about Worthiness Interviews and Temple Recommends, the answer will always be affirmative. Then you lovingly ask, "Did you feel worthy?"

Of course he didn't!

But no matter how he answers, you can have an honest conversation about grace. Grace ceases to be grace if we're worthy of it. Show him the liberating truth that we are never worthy of God's grace.

Ask Questions

I've already alluded to this method, but it demands its own category—conversations should revolve around questions, not assertions. When I talk to an LDS friend, I pretend God is watching with a word-counting scoreboard—make sure the other person wins the word-count contest. Questions force your LDS friend to do what he's been taught to avoid: think deeply. In fact, he'll likely be explaining his reasoning to himself just as much as he is to you; he has probably never thought through the natural consequences of his worldview.

Be patient when your LDS friend fails to answer your questions. Remember, this is a clash of worldviews. Protestant Christianity places a premium on thoughtful responses to life's hard questions. The LDS worldview, on the other hand, finds happiness in work, relies on emotional verifications, and fears the faith-challenge.

A few months ago I wrote a letter to an LDS friend asking several questions about his worldview. His response shouldn't have surprised me, but it did. He made no effort to answer my queries. Rather, he mailed a CD of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir with an explanation that the performances were emotionally stirring. That was all I got. It occurred to me, in his LDS worldview kind of way, he *was* answering my questions.

Avoid Attacks on LDS Leadership

Attacking Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, or any subsequent LDS leader will get you nowhere

fast. And this is probably the hardest piece of advice to follow because there are just so many easy targets. Yet, here again, we encounter another worldview difference. Some of my LDS friends genuinely believe, for example, that Joseph Smith would have been elected President of the United States were it not for his untimely martyrdom. And, yes, my LDS friends are convinced of his martyrdom. Instead of attacking, just elevate Jesus as the perfect, resurrected Prophet. Your LDS friend will take great pride in his living "Prophet"; just let him know that you serve the Eternal Prophet.

Access the Bible

It's harder than you think to get LDS friends to read the Bible. They will probably feel guilty about it initially. When I talk with LDS friends, I rarely push them toward the gospel right away; I focus all of my counsel to a simple reading of the New Testament. If they will just read it, the worldview chasm will become apparent soon enough. By encouraging them to read the Bible, you are guiding them to faith rather than arguing a point. Further, it's important to refer to the Bible as "the Bible," rather than "Scripture" or "God's Word." This practice will help your LDS friend keep his terms straight.

May the Lord bless your efforts to direct dear LDS people to God's Word. "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17).



Dr. Greg Baker serves as pastor of Fellowship Bible Church in Liberty, Utah. He also writes for rootedthinking.com.



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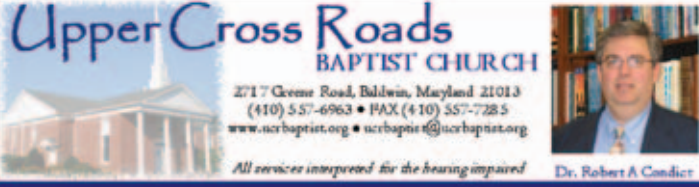
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The assertion "Jesus is God" depends for its significance altogether upon what is meant by "God."
—J. Gresham Machen

In Jesus we discover all of God we can know; in Jesus we have all of God we can need.
—Unknown

If humanism were right in declaring that man is born to be happy, he would not be born to die. Since his body is doomed to die, his task on earth evidently must be of a more spiritual nature.
—Alexander Solzhenitsyn

As the print of the seal on the wax is the express image of the seal itself, so Christ is the express image—perfect representation of God.
—Ambrose

They should have known that he [Christ] was God. His patience should have proved that to them.
—Tertullian

We are experts at deceiving others and ourselves too!
—Erwin Lutzer

Jesus Christ had a twofold personality: He was the Son of God revealing what God is like and the Son of Man revealing what man is to be like.
—Oswald Chambers

The Mormon president has acknowledged that Mormons do not believe in the same Jesus as traditional Christians. During a June 6 speaking engagement in Geneva, he said: "The traditional Christ of whom they speak is not the Christ of whom I speak. For the Christ of whom I speak has been revealed in the Dispensation of the Fullness of Times. He together with the Father appeared to the boy Joseph Smith in the year 1820, and when Joseph left the grove that day, he knew more of the nature of God than all the learned ministers of the gospel of the ages."
—*Christian News*, October 5, 1998

God's actual divine essence and His will, the administration of works—are absolutely beyond all human thought, human understanding or wisdom; in short, they are and ever will be incomprehensible, inscrutable, and altogether hidden to human reason.
—Martin Luther

Never underestimate the ability of human beings to get themselves tangled up.
—A. W. Tozer

Human nature is like a drunk peasant. Lift him into the saddle on one side, over he topples on the other side.
—Martin Luther

Mormons believe that God was once a man and that any man may eventually become a god. They put it in the form of a sort of axiom. "As man is, God once was; as God is, man may become."
—Paul B. Smith in *Other Gospels*

Humanism vainly attempts to help people lift themselves by their own bootstraps, but the gains are only illusory. Humanity repeats Lucifer's sin of pride and self-sufficiency with equally tragic results.
—David R. Chamberlain

God is not affected by our mutability; our changes do not alter Him. When we are restless, He remains serene and calm; when we are low, selfish, mean, or dispirited, He is still the unalterable I Am. The same yesterday, today, and forever, in whom is no variability, neither shadow of turning. What God is in Himself, not what we may chance to feel Him in this or that moment to be, that is our hope.
—Frederick William Robertson

Compiled by Dr. David Atkinson, pastor of Dyer Baptist Church, Dyer, Indiana.

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Regional Fellowships

South Regional Fellowship



On March 10–11 about seventy pastors, missionaries, and other full-time servants and their wives gathered for the South Regional meeting held at the Boones Creek Bible Church, Johnson City, in the beautiful mountains of East Tennessee. Dr. Tom Farrell kicked off the meeting with a challenging message, and the people of Boones Creek individually greeted and offered “mountain hospitality” to the participants. Buffalo Ridge Baptist Church (Gray, Tennessee) provided transportation, and Central Baptist Church (Greeneville, Tennessee) prepared and served food on Tuesday as we enjoyed the beauty of Elijah’s Harbor, a pastors’ retreat. After the group enjoyed a hearty meal, effective workshops, and a restful afternoon at the Harbor, we returned that evening to Boones Creek for another challenging message and the gracious hospitality of the church. The Lord was with us in a wonderful way as conference members prayed together and encouraged one another. Thank you to Dale Cunningham and to the people of Boones Creek for a great South Regional meeting.

Submitted by Mike Yarborough

Mid-Atlantic Regional Fellowship

The Mid-Atlantic Regional Fellowship was held on March 17th and 18th just south of Pittsburgh at Bible Baptist Church in Carnegie, Pennsylvania. Pastor Phil Golden and his wife, Chantal, were gracious hosts to a group of about twenty pastors from four states. The meals and facilities were a perfect complement to the preaching from John Vaughn, Steve Spence, Bob Harrison Jr., and Jeff Hargraves. The upcoming theme for the FBFI Annual Fellowship (“In His Image”—Gen. 1:27a) served as the theme for this regional meeting. Tuesday afternoon Bob Harrison Jr. led an excursion to the half-square-mile eating and shopping area northeast of Pittsburgh called “The Strip.”

Larry Brubaker’s enthusiastic song leading has been a blessing to our regional meeting the last few years, and this year was no different. The music, preaching, and fellowship each met the objective of the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship International’s purpose—a rallying point for Fundamental Baptists.

Submitted by Douglas B. Wright



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Written and Compiled by Dr. Layton Talbert

RUTH: DISPLAYING THE

The Book of Judges ends with two bizarre stories: the idolatry of Micah and the Danites (chs. 17–18) and the Levite’s concubine (chs. 19–21). As Goslinga (*Joshua, Judges, and Ruth*) notes, “Although these chapters do form an integral part of the book, they differ in character from everything that precedes them. Instead of carrying the history of the judges further, they shed a unique light on the whole period by presenting two stories that give an impression of Israel’s condition at that time.” The very next story we encounter is the Book of Ruth. What all three stories have in common is that they actually occur *early* in the period of the judges, and they all focus attention on Bethlehem, prompting Eugene Merrill (*Kingdom of Priests*) to refer to these three stories together as the “Bethlehem trilogy.” There is some evidence that the Ruth narrative may originally have been part of Judges. However that may be, its connectedness and its distinctiveness from the concluding stories of Judges are apparent. If Judges 17–21 are a window into the prevailing spiritual darkness of that era, the story of Ruth reveals the shafts of light that can penetrate and brighten even times of moral and spiritual degradation when God’s people reflect His character in whatever circumstances they find themselves.

WHO Is Ruth About?

The answer may seem absurdly obvious; just look at the title. To be sure, Ruth figures prominently in the story from beginning (1:16) to end (4:13). But Ruth’s story is actually folded into the story of someone else whose prominence spans even more broadly from beginning (1:2–15) to end (4:14–17).

Imagine the story of Ruth as a film. It opens with the camera’s predominant attention on one character at the center of attention and action. Naomi is the one who loses the most and has the least hope. Granted, the references to Naomi in 1:1–18, 22 are necessary to explain where Ruth comes from. But if the story is really only about Ruth, then 1:19–21 is irrelevant. On the other hand, if the narrative text gives attention to it, it can’t be irrelevant. Naomi is not just a secondary character; her personal experience and viewpoint are significant to the narrator.

When the action of the story shifts to Ruth and then Boaz, Naomi keeps resurfacing at crucial points (2:1, 2, 18–23) and guiding the action with the shrewd subtlety of a consummate matchmaker (3:1–6, 16–18). Even as the story climaxes and concludes with Ruth’s marriage, the final frames of the film divert our attention from Ruth to Naomi. Ruth’s final action and reference is in 4:13; it’s a

significant action—she has a son. That only makes it all the more remarkable when the end of the story is given to *Naomi*. Notice 4:14, 15—Ruth bears a son, and whom do the townswomen congratulate? Naomi! In 4:16, who is holding Ruth’s newborn child? Naomi! And according to 4:17, whose “son” is this? Naomi’s!

If this is really Ruth’s story, why does the narrator keep framing everything in terms of its significance for Naomi? Because the story of Ruth is *at least* as much about Naomi as it is about Ruth. The circle of her journey—geographically and, more importantly, spiritually—is complete.

And what about 4:18–22? If Ruth were a film, I suspect this would be the final “what-happened-after” caption on the screen. The last image of Naomi holding Obed fades, followed by this little genealogy as the denouement that tells you where all this goes historically—the significance of these events in the bigger historical (and theological) picture. Then the credits roll.

In traditional plot analysis, the main character is called the protagonist; that’s who the story is *about*. I’ve just made a case for Naomi as the protagonist, not Ruth. But can a story have more than one protagonist, or more than one plotline? If you have ever read a Dickens novel you know the answer to that. A story can have multiple, parallel, intertwining plotlines. Isn’t that true of life itself? Each believer’s life is a storyline of what God is doing in every child of His. Each believer is the protagonist of his or her own storyline, and each storyline parallels and intertwines and interacts with many others along the way. God works providentially and differently with each of us so that you could even say that the *themes* of our storylines differ from each other’s. Even though God’s ultimate goal for all of us is the same (glorified likeness to Christ), that final tapestry will be woven of individual storylines that are as unique and distinctive as we are from one another in the creative providence of God.

All this means (to return to the Book of Ruth) that how we express the “theme” of this book will depend on whose storyline we are tracing. First, we need to see the major ideas that the narrator builds into the way he tells this story.

WHAT Is Ruth About?

Several themes or motifs surface throughout the book of Ruth. Here are some of the major ones.

Unfaithfulness/Faithfulness

The previous *Glance* column noted that throughout the book of Judges Israel *forsook* [*‘azab*] the Lord and failed to be loyal to their God (2:12, 13; 10:10, 13, 16). The opposite

LOYAL-KINDNESS OF GOD

of forsaking, *chesed* (loyalty, loyal-kindness), is not a major term in Judges; in fact, it is significant by its absence. The word *chesed* occurs only twice in Judges (and one of those is the negative remark, “neither shewed they kindness.” Ruth is a different story, however, in which loyalty (*chesed*) becomes a controlling factor in people’s behavior. When Naomi decides to return to Israel, Naomi asks for God’s **loyal-kindness** to Ruth and Orpah, according to their **loyal-kindness** to their Israelite husbands and to Naomi (1:8). Ruth’s clinging to Naomi (1:14) and determination *not* to forsake Naomi (1:16, 17) gives her a reputation for loyalty (2:11). When Naomi discovers Ruth’s contact with her kinsman Boaz, Naomi expresses gratitude that God (or Boaz, or both) has *not forsaken* his **loyal-kindness** to both the living and to the dead (2:20). Boaz praises Ruth’s **loyal-kindness** (3:10), not to him but to her dead husband and to Naomi. Finally, attention is drawn to God’s faithfulness to Naomi (4:14) and to Ruth’s faithfulness to Naomi (4:15). The Book of Ruth showcases the loyal-lovingkindness of God and man and woman! This is a quality that God possesses and values highly in us (Hos. 6:6a; Mic. 6:8). God values and rewards loyal-lovingkindness.

Emptiness/Fullness

This could also be expressed as *Loss/Recovery*. The story opens with an emphasis on loss, emptiness, need. It is implied in the references to famine (1:1) and death (1:3, 5) and expressed in Naomi’s statement, “I went out **full** [*malē*],” and the LORD hath brought me home again **empty** [*rēyqam*]” (1:21). The fullness motif begins to reverse this in chapter 2 when Boaz provides grain, food and drink, permission and protection. As a result, Ruth “did eat, and was **sufficed**” [*saba*] and later gave to Naomi what “she had reserved after she was **sufficed**” [*saba*] (2:14–18). Boaz later gives Ruth a bundle of barley, saying, “Go not **empty** [*rēyqam*] unto thy mother in law” (3:15–17). In the end, Ruth gets a husband with a blessing for abundant progeny (4:9–12), conception, and a son (4:13); Naomi gets a (grand) son and is amply provided for (4:14–17).

Bitterness/Blessing

This really has to do with the transformation of Naomi’s *perception* of God’s posture toward her throughout the book. The reasons for her disappointment are clear enough in her circumstances—famine drove them out of Judah to Moab, and death took her husband and sons. Even the names are suggestive: Mahlon means “sick,” Chilion means “pining.” Even Naomi (“pleasant”) asks for a new

name, Mara (“bitter”)—not because she is bitter against God. Bitter people don’t keep talking positively about God and wishing God’s blessing on others (1:8, 9; 2:19, 20). But to Naomi, God seems bitter against her. We get five windows into her perception of God’s posture toward her in 1:13, 20, 21—“the hand of the LORD is gone out against me”; “the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me”; “the LORD hath brought me home again empty”; “the LORD hath testified against me”; “the Almighty hath afflicted me.” Over against Naomi’s (mis)perception of God are several hints of God’s gracious providence. Ruth’s “chance” stumbling upon Boaz’s fields (2:3), Boaz’s arrival and discovery (2:4), the fact of Boaz’s existence as kinsman (2:20), Boaz’s favorable response (3:10, 11), waiting to see “how the matter will fall” (3:18), and the final attribution of all these turns of fortune to the Lord’s goodness and provision (4:14, 15).

Kinsman-Redeemer

This is one of the clearest and most theological themes in the story. The Hebrew word for “redeem(er)” appears a startling 23x in this little book. The NT doctrine of redemption is rooted in the soil of the OT concept and imagery of redemption. God Himself originated the kinsman-redeemer concept and injected it into Israel’s life and laws in order to paint yet another picture of the redemptive work that Christ would accomplish by becoming our “kinsman-redeemer” through the incarnation. The significance of Boaz as a picture-prophecy of Christ is certainly justified. One can affirm the immediate historical-theological themes of the story without dismissing the assertion of Christ that the OT is Christocentric (John 5; Luke 24). To probe that Christological significance a bit further, consider the parallels between this story and Paul’s argument in Romans 9–11: *Boaz [Christ] redeems Naomi [Israel] through entering into a marriage covenant with Ruth [Gentile]*.

The Message(s) of Ruth

These (and other) themes play out slightly differently in the distinct but complementary storylines of the major characters in Ruth. When viewed from the standpoint of Naomi’s storyline, the book’s message is also the life-message of Naomi: *Despite the appearance of our circumstances to the contrary, we can trust in the loyal-kindness of our God*. When viewed from the standpoint of Ruth’s (or even Boaz’s) storyline, the book’s message can be summarized this way: *God notes and providentially rewards our loyal-kindness to others, sometimes beyond what we could ask or think*.

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Views Regarding the Religiously Unaffiliated

In a report generated in early April, Allen Downey, a computer scientist of Olin College of Engineering, concludes that the dramatic increase of religiously unaffiliated is rooted in the rise and consumption of the Internet. From 1990 to 2010 the number of people who identify themselves as religiously unaffiliated rose from 8% to 18%. Even more alarming are statistics from a 2012 Pew Forum Survey that indicate that one-third of adults under the age of thirty consider themselves religiously unaffiliated. Downey's conclusion is that the Internet opens up other religious and non-religious expressions that resonate with individuals' current belief structures.

However, Joe Miller, employed by Thomas Nelson Publishers, has arrived at a very different conclusion. He ties these changes to the staggering amounts of pornography readily available and frequently accessed on the Internet. Miller goes on to explain: "Given the Christian understanding of the spiritual life, we're not capable of simultaneously pursuing our lusts and sanctification. Such a pursuit causes internal dissonance, and the only resolution involves eventually conceding to the pull of one or the other. . . . If you accept the modern world's view on sex, and abandon Christianity's teaching, you will soon abandon Christianity."

This article can be accessed at <http://www.christianpost.com/news/is-internet-porn-to-blame-for-millennials-leaving-the-church-117739/>.

Today's Most Popular Translation

Christianity Today recently published an article reporting on a Lilly Foundation study conducted through the Indiana University-Perdue University of Indianapolis (IUPUI) entitled "The Bible and American Life." Throughout the article author Sarah Zylstra compares that study to similar studies done by the American Bible Society and LifeWay.

According to the IUPUI study, 55% of Americans who read the Scriptures choose the Authorized King James Version for their reading. The New International Version is a distant second, at 24%, even though it has topped the bookstore bestseller lists for decades.

Studies from previous years reveal similar findings. Barna, teaming with the American Bible Society, found that 52% of Americans use the KJV or NKJV with 11% preferring the NIV. A 2011 LifeWay study found that 62% of all Americans own a King James Bible.

Regarding those who actually read the Bible, the three reports are somewhat divergent. The IUPUI study declares that 78% of Americans read their Bibles monthly. This is contrasted with 41% by Barna and 53% by LifeWay.

This article can be accessed at

<http://www.christianitytoday.com/gleanings/2014/march/most-popular-and-fastest-growing-bible-translation-niv-kjv.html>.

Downward Trends

There is a growing trend among singles who identify themselves as Christian toward a type of sexual atheism: they act in ways that are inconsistent with Scripture but show no concern for the disparity. In a recent survey conducted by ChristianMingle.com, singles between the ages of eighteen and fifty-nine were asked if they would engage in sexual relationships prior to marriage. A stunning sixty-three percent said that they would.

We can visualize Jesus asking the question that He asked as recorded in Luke 6:46: "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"

Read more at <http://www.christianpost.com/news/sexual-atheism-christian-dating-data-reveals-a-deeper-spiritual-malaise-117717/>.

Prodigal PKs

The fact that there is a designation for children of ministry homes ("PKs," short for "preachers' kids") demonstrates that there is a stereotypical way of viewing this group. While some view PKs as having it all together, many view them as rebellious. The facts demonstrate that the stereotype is perhaps inaccurate, yet several trends are worthy of consideration.

First, two out of every five PKs experience serious doubts concerning their faith. This is only two percentage points behind

the average Millennial who grew up associated with Christianity. Thirty-three percent of PKs will leave the church, and seven percent will abandon God entirely.

Among the pastors surveyed, the following list reflects what they saw as the greatest reason that their children struggled with the faith. (1) Twenty-eight percent of those surveyed indicate that expectations others outside the family placed upon them negatively affected PKs. (2) Eighteen percent indicate that exposure to the negative aspects of church hindered their children's faith. (3) Fourteen percent indicate that their children did not see the faith consistently modeled in the home. Other reasons include peers and culture (9%), the child's free will (7%), and the child's never having a personal faith in the first place (6%).

Very few respondents registered regrets—but for one glaring exception: 42% of those surveyed wish that they had spent more time with their children.

This article can be accessed at <https://www.barna.org/barna-update/family-kids/644-prodigal-pastor-kids-fact-or-fiction>.

The Church

In a Barna survey addressing US adults' belief, when asked what helps you grow in your faith, answers varied. Prayer, friends, reading the Bible, even having children made the list. But attending church did not make the top ten.

Forty-nine percent of US adults indicate that church attendance was “very” or “somewhat” important. But fifty-one percent say church attendance is “not too” or “not at all” important. Only twenty percent of adults under the age of thirty believe that church is important, while thirty percent take an anti-church position.

The definition of regular attendance has changed as well. People who attend once every four to six weeks consider themselves as regular attenders. Thirty-five percent of those who responded indicate that church is not relevant to them. Thirty percent indicate they go elsewhere to get close to God.

This article can be accessed at <http://www.christianpost.com/news/church-is-not-important-51-percent-of-us-adults-say-117263/>.

Obama Appointee

President Barack Obama has appointed a woman named Azizah Yahia Muhammad Toufiq al-Hibri to the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom. The president’s appointment is a firm supporter of Sharia Law.

Read more at <http://visiontoamerica.com/17234/obama-religious-freedom-appointee-shariah-law-is-superior-to-american-law/#4WSMUB7RUBhtUqsp.99>.

Pope Francis’s Unity Theme

Official Catholic dogma is quite clear on the nature of Catholic unity with other faiths. The Council of Trent states, “If any one saith, that by faith alone the impious is justified; in such wise as to mean, that nothing else is required to co-operate in order to the obtaining the grace of Justification, and that it is not in any way necessary, that he

NOTABLE QUOTES

The sun shall not shine, the wind shall not blow, to the church’s hurt. For the church’s Head ruleth over all things and hath all things in subjection. Therefore let all the enemies consult together, this king and that power, there is a counsel in heaven which will disturb and dash all their counsels.—Richard Sibbes

Religious flesh and sinful flesh are one: no wonder that, with a great deal of religion, temper and selfishness and worldliness are so often found side by side. The religion of the flesh cannot conquer sin.—Andrew Murray

Everywhere there are commands and inducements to pray, and great stories of deliverance and victory, experience and vision, are all examples of prevailing prayer. . . . There are many problems about prayer, and apart from praying there is no solution to them.—Samuel Chadwick

We can easily manage if we will only take, each day, the burden appointed to it. But the load will be too heavy for us if we carry yesterday’s burden over again today, and then add the burden of the morrow before we are required to bear it.—John Newton

The winter prepares the earth for the spring, so do afflictions sanctified prepare the soul for glory.—Richard Sibbes

Naturally, men are prone to spin themselves a web of opinions out of their own brain, and to have a religion that may be called their own. They are far readier to make themselves a faith, than to receive that which God hath formed to their hands; are far readier to receive a doctrine that tends to their carnal commodity, or honor, or delight, than one that tends to self-denial.—Richard Baxter

I am not bound to win, but I am bound to be true. I am not bound to succeed, but I am bound to live by the light that I have. I must stand with anybody that stands right, and stand with him while he is right, and part with him when he goes wrong.—Abraham Lincoln

Compiled by Robert Conduct, FBFI Executive Board member and pastor of Upper Cross Roads Baptist Church, Baldwin, Maryland.

be prepared and disposed by the movement of his own will; let him be anathema.”

Pope Francis recently sent a video message to Kenneth Copeland. When the video was presented at Kenneth Copeland Ministries, Anglican Episcopal Bishop Tony Palmer, who was one of the speakers at the event, declared to those gathered, “Luther’s protest is over. Is yours?”

The pope has made several direct overtures to bring unity to Muslims and even atheists. Yet there is a group that he finds troublesome. “In ideologies there is not Jesus: in his tenderness, his love, his meekness. And ideologies are rigid, always. Of every sign: rigid. And when a Christian becomes a disciple of the ideology, he has lost the faith: he is no longer a disciple of Jesus, he is a disciple of this attitude of thought. . . . For this reason Jesus said to them: ‘You have taken away the key of knowledge.’ The knowledge of Jesus is transformed into an ideological and also moralistic knowledge, because these close the door with many requirements. The faith becomes ideology and ideology frightens, ideology chases away the people, distances, distances the people and distances of the Church of the people. But it is a serious illness, this of ideological Christians. It is an illness, but it is not new, eh?”

This article may be accessed at <http://thetruthwins.com/archives/pope-francis-and-the-emerging-one-world-religion>.

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ON LANGUAGE & SCRIPTURE

Language can't be exhaustively precise, because humans can't—and don't have to be. It's only the joker (or the obsessive-compulsive) who lists his address as 105 Highland Avenue, Greenville, NC, USA, Earth, Solar System, Milky Way, Universe, Third Line in Palm of God's Right Hand. At some point, you have to stop specifying your meaning and assume that people will pick up all the other necessary information from context.

So it's no surprise that the Bible isn't exhaustively precise. Think of Psalm 16:6: "The **lines** are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage."

I must admit I read and even memorized this verse without ever stopping to ask the all-important question: "What lines?" I think I always assumed that the pleasantly falling lines were just an obscure way of saying that things were going well for David. I mean, don't we all like it when lines start gently falling on us, hitting us in just the right spots? (Yeah, I have an itch right there—ahh . . . Thank you, lines!) Maybe not.

Looking up the Hebrew word only tells us what the English translators already did (you'll find that's very common): it means "lines." So what do we do now?

We look to the literary and historical contexts to supply the other necessary information. Language wouldn't work at all if we couldn't rely on those two kinds of knowledge. The academic field which explores this truism is called "Relevance Theory" because it tries to figure out just what background knowledge is *relevant* in any given act of human communication.

Two little pieces of relevant information are supplied by the context of verse 6: (1) In the previous verse, David talks about his "inheritance" and his "lot." (2) At the end of verse 6, David speaks again of his beautiful "heritage," a word often used synonymously with "inheritance."

So what ancient Jewish inheritance/heritage came with pleasant lines and was determined by lot? Land! The "lines" are boundary lines. The ropes bounding David's allotment of land, he is saying, were well placed to include some choice property. David didn't have to add the word "boundary"; the context did that for him.

But David is clearly speaking metaphorically here, because he just said in verse 5 that he views the Lord as his inheritance. God Himself is David's portion, lot, and heritage. What more beautiful and pleasant property could you get? It's no wonder that David ends the psalm by saying, "Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore."

Dr. Mark L. Ward Jr. serves as an author of Bible curriculum materials at BJU Press. He blogs at byfaithweunderstand.com.





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thing that is never allowed within the ranks. A very minor infraction of protocol was made the day we were there, so the counselor to the bishop had to redo the vote so it conformed to the rulebook.

The particular Sunday we visited happened to be the week in the month called "Fast Sunday" where people line up on the platform to "bear their testimony." The lines were long with people of all ages. Two things stood out to us as we observed this testimony time. One, the testimonies varied very little. A phrase common to all was, "I believe the church is true." Second was the number of young children (at least two for every one adult) who stood and all virtually said the same exact words. "I want to bear my testimony. . . . I believe the church is true, and there is a lot of love in my family. I say this in the name of Jesus Christ, amen!" When finished, the child would return to his or her seat, where Mom or Dad would give the child a smile and a pat, as if to say, "Thanks for bringing honor to our family."

Lessons Learned

So what did we take away from our field trip?

1. Much revolves around keeping the rules.
2. Honor the pioneers by remaining faithful to the church without question.
3. Certain mantras, such as "I believe the church is true," are oft recited, almost as if to convince themselves.
4. For children in particular, the church is all about family honor, the epitome of which is serving on an LDS mission.

As we debriefed after the meeting, my wife and I had broken hearts for these people; they know nothing else but this very ritualistic, rule-bound, duty-bound form of worship. Some of the first people you will meet at the

church I pastor, Marysvale Baptist Church, are those who have left this dead religion and have discovered new life through God's transforming grace. However, doing so has been quite costly for some of them with regard to their family relationships. They have been scolded, shunned, maligned, and even threatened for having left the LDS Church. Their attempts to explain their decision and witness to their families have sometimes led to heated arguments. Their new family in Christ has had to replace their blood relatives and provide a new social structure for them. May the number of these genuine converts increase as we love, pray for, and witness to these dear souls.

Jonathan Edwards pastors Marysvale Baptist Church; operates Eagles Nest Baptist Ministries, a boarding school for at-risk boys; and leads outreaches to several polygamist communities. He and his wife, Chrissa, have been involved in church planting in Utah since 1977.



* "Relief Society," *Handbook 2: Administering the Church*, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Salt Lake City, 2010.

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"You Should Be a Military

Those words stung like a wasp into my soul and ruined my lunch! I did not want to consider being a military chaplain. I had been in the Air Force for fifteen years when a gentleman uttered those words over lunch. I did not want to be one of those "compromising, lack-of-conviction chaplains." However, that statement is far from the truth, and being a military chaplain has been one of the biggest blessings in my life.

A Missionary Who Holds to His Beliefs

First, being a military chaplain is not about losing your convictions or your doctrinal stance—it really solidifies your stance. My first supervisor as a Chaplain Candidate was a Seventh-Day Adventist. My first workday was a Friday, and after work he told me to take tomorrow off and get some rest. I really thought it was strange because I had just started my orders. However, he was holding true to his beliefs. And over the next thirty-plus days, we worked together while both holding to our beliefs and convictions. As a military chaplain, your beliefs and convictions are not just penned for an ordination counsel; they are lived out and practiced for everyone to see.

Secondly, being a military chaplain allows one to be a missionary in the military. Successful missionaries spend time learning the language, culture, and worldview in order to present the gospel. The military has its own subculture, and the chaplain is taught that culture and operates continually in that milieu. When a saved military member comes to the chaplain seeking counseling, the chaplain can apply the Bible to the situation even if he doesn't know much about the individual. Sometimes, the counselee is an atheist and wants to see a chaplain because the chaplain has privileged communication. One might ask, "How do you counsel an atheist?" Wisely, of course! One listens and offers advice while modeling Biblical love and demonstrating the hope you have in Christ. Many times the chaplain will see the atheist again and doors will open up when he seeks the chaplain in a time of crisis. The chaplain is building bridges and praying constantly for the lost.

However, there are times where a chaplain has an opportunity to make disciples for Christ. When the military member understands the gospel and seeks to live it out—there is nothing like it in the world. It is thrilling to see someone who works in a shop that's notorious for harsh language and cruel jokes decide to live for Christ.

It has been said that "a transformed life is the greatest apologetic for the Christian faith." And once a military member gets it, then watch out—you've made a missionary for the Lord.

A Model for Christ Who Depends on God

Thirdly, being a chaplain blesses your soul. The military chaplain is the person people turn to for hope in a crisis. The chaplain helps ascribe heavenly meaning to life's difficulties. For some, the chaplain is seen as a good-luck charm; others see him as the person of God. When the chaplain has the opportunity to preach what is potentially the last message a person will hear on this side of eternity—it is a blessing. It is such a blessing to model Christ in an environment when many are seeking hope and looking for those with hope.

Fourthly, being a military chaplain increases your dependence on God. Any minister knows ministry is about bringing glory to God and allowing Him to work in and through our lives. It is true that in ministry and chaplaincy a minister must depend on God. However, being a chaplain means deploying. In some of those deployments, a chaplain can find himself in harm's way. So the chaplain is praying

not only for wisdom in ministry but for safety from the Lord. People constantly turn to the chaplain to find hope and answers for life. In those deployments, chaplains see some of the most fruitful ministry opportunities of their entire lives.

Deployments are rough on military families. How an unsaved couple can survive six months to a year of separation and stay married is baffling to me. For the chaplain, it is rough being away from family. It means missing birthdays, holidays, anniversaries, recitals, and the list goes on. It means dependence upon God to care for our families while we're deployed. It means asking for wisdom on keeping the marriage relationship strong through calls, e-mail, Skype, or (worse), "snail mail." It means cultivating a prayer life for your family—like one would never imagine.

Always "On"

Like any minister, a chaplain is never off. Sometimes you are doing PT (physical training) and counseling at the same time. Or standing in line for food while someone is pouring out his heart to you. In short, the chaplain becomes the saddle for everyone to sit on—and he has



Chaplain!"

CH (CPT) Alan Findley

to understand who is the horse that can pull him through tough times: it is the Lord.

Then the chaplain has to learn to deal with problems that are unique to the military. He will have to work with ministers from various faiths with various convictions and personalities. At the same time, the chaplain has to maintain his personal walk with God, care for his family, and conduct ministry. The chaplain must be continuing to develop as a military officer. Further, the military chaplain deals with counseling problems that civilian pastors will not deal with (or that they might, but only on a limited basis).

Currently, I have the wonderful privilege of serving our military members in Turkey for a year. I last kissed my wife and children in 2013. The sourness of missing my family has been tempered by the sweetness of the Lord and the ministry here. Every day I thank the Lord for allowing me the opportunity to serve in His vineyard. There are times when I reflect back to my days as a young Airman from the inner city of Chicago, visiting for the first time in my life a multicultural church outside of Edwards Air Force Base in California. Pastor Ron Smith preached the gospel, and I responded in my dorm room that night. It took a few years before I learned to serve God, but He was patient and chastened me. Later, He

called me into the ministry, gave me a family, and allowed me to plant a church. So it seemed idiotic when sitting at the dinner table to refuse to heed the call to military chaplaincy. Thankfully, I heeded God's call.

Maybe God is leading you or someone else to military chaplaincy. I can tell you from this, the Bible verse is still true, "the harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers [good chaplains] are few"!



The LDS View of God and the Godhead (Continued from page 8)

everlasting to everlasting, thou art God." John 4:24 says, "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." Jesus defined what a spirit is when he said in Luke 24:39, "A spirit hath not flesh and bones."

The LDS God did not create the universe in the way the Bible teaches—by speaking a word and bringing it into existence out of nothing (Psalm 33:6, 9; Heb. 11:3). In *The Book of Abraham* 4:1, Joseph Smith said, "And the Lord said: Let us go down. And they went down at the beginning, and they, that is the Gods, organized and formed the heavens and the earth." By "organized" Joseph Smith taught (in the King Follett Discourse) that pre-existing elements were brought together. As a result, Mormons believe that matter, rather than God, is eternal.

Concerning the Trinity or Godhead, the LDS Church's first article of faith states, "We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost." An explanation of this article is given on the Mormon website www.lds.org/topics/godhead.

These three beings make up the Godhead. They preside over this world and all other creations of our Father in Heaven. But where Latter-Day Saints differ from other Christian religions is in their belief that God and Jesus Christ are glorified, physical beings and that each member of the Godhead is a separate being.

Although the members of the Godhead are distinct beings with distinct roles, they are one in purpose and doctrine. They are perfectly united in bringing to pass Heavenly Father's divine plan of salvation.

By saying each member of the Godhead is "a separate or distinct being," Mormons mean a separate or distinct God. In John 10:30 Jesus says, "I and my Father are one." The LDS would interpret this verse to say Jesus and the Father are one in purpose, not one God. But in the context, the "one thing" Jesus is referring to is one God (each person being equal in nature as well as purpose). Verses 31–33 show the Jews understood it to be that way. The Bible clearly teaches there is only one true God who is three coequal and coeternal persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

In summary, the LDS God and the LDS Godhead are a false God and Godhead, different from the God of the Bible. In witnessing to LDS one must keep this in mind. It may be useful to use Isaiah 43:10 to identify the difference in beliefs. However, the main issue is Christ, who He is and what He did to provide complete salvation by grace alone through faith alone in Him.

Mike Bardon, DST, DMin, has served in evangelism and church planting in Utah with Baptist Mid-Missions since 1974.



The Honor Given in Serving Christ

In John 12:26 Jesus said, “If any man serve me, let him follow me; and where I am, there shall also my servant be: if any man serve me, him will my Father honour.” Here our Lord brings home a tremendous truth that we sometimes overlook—the Lord will always honor those who serve Him. Sometimes Christians feel that they are making a great sacrifice if they give up or forsake things to serve Him. We see this in the life of Peter in Matthew 19:27: “Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?” The Lord answered him in v. 29: “And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.” What a profound and wonderful response from the lips of Christ! No sacrifice is too great to make for Him.

Let me relate what happened in my life when I first got saved. As I started my journey with the Lord, my life began to change and grow spiritually; then I felt the Lord’s calling me into the ministry. At that time I owned a truck that I was very proud of; I would say that it was the dearest possession in my life. I was getting ready to go to Bob Jones University, and one day I called my dad into the kitchen and asked him to hold out his hand. When he did, I dropped my truck keys into his hand and said, “Dad, I’m giving my truck to you.” I didn’t want anything to hinder me in my preparation for the ministry. Now, was that forsaking something for my Lord? Yes, but let me tell you the rest of the story. I gave up a truck because I sincerely wanted to serve the Lord; however, the Lord has since then given me two new trucks as gifts! Does the Lord honor the sacrifices that we make? Yes. By the way, I didn’t give the truck away out of any ulterior motive—I gave it out of sheer love and devotion to serve my Lord. And what did He do? He gave me more than I deserve! What a kind and gracious Heavenly Father we have!

The Lord weighs the spirit and motives of our service to Him. There are only two kinds of materials with which we can build our lives. First Corinthians 3:12 mentions gold, silver, precious stones—and wood, hay, and stubble.

The gold, silver, and precious stones refer to works given to the Lord out of a heart of pure obedience and love to Him. This means serving the Lord with the right motives. There are pastors, missionaries, evangelists, and others who are serving the Lord with this passion. They are not trying to seek praise and adoration from men; their service is one of loyalty to the Lord and His Word.

Many years ago I met a man who told me that he would count it an honor if he could just sweep floors for the Lord. Recently, I met a layman in Africa who was going to the Congo to reach the Muslims for Christ. It meant leaving his wife and two children for a month, but he was doing this because he has such a deep love for Christ. We find this love for Christ demonstrated in the life of a widow in Luke 21:1–4: “And he looked up, and saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. And he saw also a certain poor widow casting in thither two mites. And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: For all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had.” The Lord knows the motive of the heart and rewards those who serve Him out of love.

But then there are others who build with wood, hay, and stubble. Those who do so are serving the Lord with the wrong motives. They want recognition and the approval of men; they want people to notice them for their service. These are works that are good for nothing. The Bible tells the end result of such works in 1 Corinthians 3:15: “If any man’s work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.” This is a warning to guard our motives in serving our Lord.

The Lord promises that He will honor us now in our service to Him and that He will also honor us in the life to come: 1 Peter 1:4, “To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you.” Meditate upon that great truth and let it be the motivation of your service to the Lord.

Evangelist Jerry Sivnksty may be contacted at PO Box 141, Starr, SC 29684 or via e-mail at evangjsivn@aol.com.



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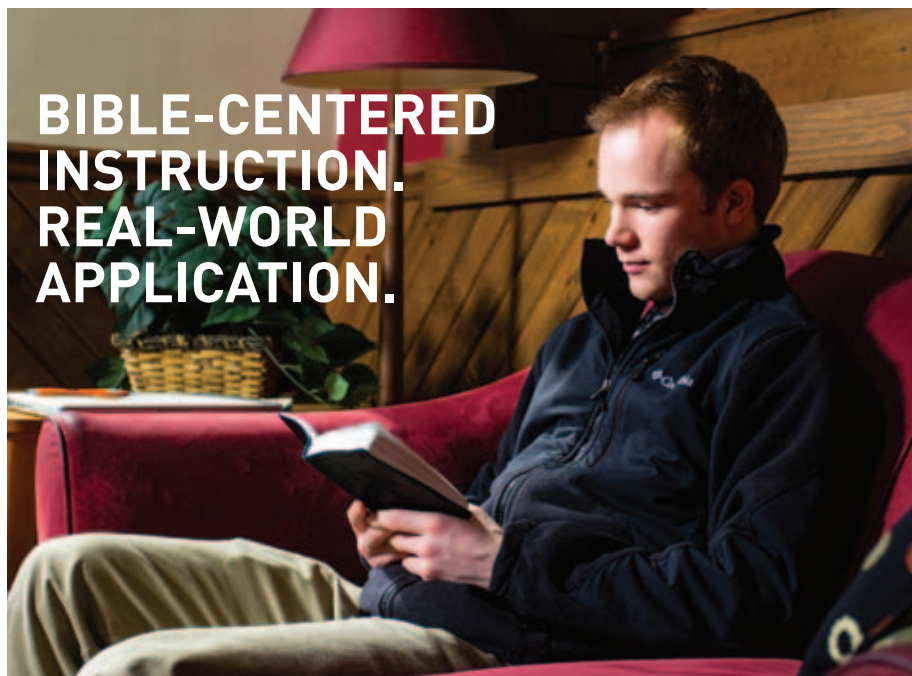
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