

**WITNESSING EFFECTIVELY TO LATTER DAY SAINTS (LDS)**  
**(aka PROFESSED MORMONS): PART 4**  
**Equipping Hour at Saving Grace Bible Church, Osprey, FL; 8/6/2017**

**INTRODUCTION**

For the last three weeks we have been discussing material on the LDS Church's teachings and doctrines so you may witness more effectively and prayerfully to professed Mormons.

**PURPOSE**

To compare LDS Church doctrines with the Bible so you may minister truth to professed Mormons by comparing LDS doctrinal issues with Bible truth. You need to be informed on the LDS church's main doctrinal issues in order to reach out to professed Mormons who are being deceived. Also, to strengthen your knowledge and deepen your understanding of the Word of God.

**INTERESTING FACTS ASSOCIATED WITH LIVING IN UTAH**

1. Differences between Jack Mormons and Totally Committed Mormons.

- It is important to learn the language/definitions of professed Mormon, which they are taught by the LDS Church

a) Salvation by Grace. Also known as general salvation – all humans, by the fact that they are resurrected from the dead are “saved by grace,” though most never received eternal life.

b) Jesus Christ. The literal begotten son of God the Father and Heavenly Mother. The Jesus of Mormonism is the firstborn of God's offspring, including all angels, demons, and humans. He is the literal brother of Lucifer.

c) God the Father. Also known as Heavenly Father or Elohim. The God of Mormonism was once a human and currently inhabits a body of flesh and bones.

d) Eternal Life. Also known as individual salvation, exaltation, or godhood. Eternal life is only gained by faithful Mormons who keep all of the commandments (celestial law).

e) Exaltation. Synonymous with eternal life. Only those who gain exaltation have the ability to become gods and procreate throughout eternity.

f) Eternal Increase. The ability of exalted persons to procreate throughout all eternity.

g) Gentiles. Those outside the LDS Church (i.e., non-Mormons).

2. Testimonies of Former Mormons

- Bev taught a Women's SS Class; at least one gal married to an LDS man.

- Kim B. (read testimony)

- Jeff and Becky C.: Joel/Paul's Soccer Coach; ostracized by LDS family/moved

- Maggie L.: LDS Missionaries at door – “I will pray for you.”

3. Stories Associated with our Family's Adventures in UT

- Joy Inviting Lindsey to AWANA; Lindsey Inviting Joy to LDS Home Economics

- Praying for and expressing acts of love toward Professed Mormons (e.g., hay)

- Ever visit an LDS Ward? Only for funerals to express compassion/condolences

- Vanpool rides from Tooele to Dugway (45 miles one way); captive audience

**REVIEW OF PART 3:**

Mini Role Play: How to Discuss These LDS Church Doctrines with Professed Mormons. Engage them in

discussions, as they enjoy discussing their beliefs. Ask questions.

(i) The LDS Church's Teaching on the Doctrine of Man.

- LDS Church doctrine teaches that Adam's fall was a 'fall upward' and it was not sinful. The LDS Church maintains that Adam's sin was necessary for the propagation of the human race. They do not support the orthodox Christian and biblical position on the doctrine of depravity – Romans 3:10-25.

(ii) The LDS Church's Teaching on Original Sin/the Atonement/Justification by Faith

- The LDS Church does not view the atonement of Christ in an orthodox Christian and biblical manner. Instead of the atonement occurring on the cross, the LDS Church teaches that the atonement occurred primarily in the Garden of Gethsemane when Jesus shed His blood.

- The Bible is clear that Christ's Death on the cross was a propitiation.

A propitiation – an appeasement or satisfaction – to placate God's wrath. Christ's sacrifice turned away God's wrath on His elect. Jesus' sacrifice on the cross is where Jesus bore our sins (1 Peter 2:24) where He became a propitiation, the sacrifice for our sins. Notice that the sacrifice on the cross is a public event, and it is this public display where propitiation occurred: "whom God displayed publicly as a propitiation in His blood through faith." (Romans 3:25). In his commentary on the Gospel of Luke, John F. MacArthur, Jr. wrote:

When Jesus prayed fervently in Luke 22:44, His sweat became like drops of blood. This condition is called hematomidrosis, which is characterized by blood oozing from the skin. It is most frequently caused by mental and emotional strain, causing subcutaneous capillaries to dilate and burst, releasing blood to mingle with sweat. That was a graphic confirmation of the Lord's statement to His disciples when He said, "My soul is grieved to the point of death." (e.g., Matthew 26:38; Mark 14:34).

Note to discuss with professed Mormons -- The Garden of Gethsemane was not a public display of Christ shedding blood. Therefore, the sacrifice of redemption, where Jesus bore our sins as the propitiation, did not occur in the Garden of Gethsemane but in the public display of the cross (Romans 3:25). Thus, when we see the term *propitiation* referred to in Scripture, we know it is referring to the sacrifice on the cross.

(iii) The LDS Church's Teaching on Man's Pre-Mortal Existence as "Spirit Children"

Man was a pre-existent spirit and that mankind is of the same species as God. Our origin is supposed to have been as procreated children of God, born as spirits in some other realm. In that spirit world existence we progressed as far as was possible, but to become truly like our Heavenly Father we needed to obtain physical bodies. Man also needed to learn the difference between good and evil. Since our Heavenly Father has progressed so far that He cannot allow evil into His presence, it was necessary for us to leave Him for some place where we could encounter and overcome evil ourselves:

"We were **first begotten as spirit children in heaven** and then born naturally on earth" (Journal of Discourses, 4:218).

**The Bible clearly teaches** that God created Adam, the first man, and all other men after him. This is in direct contrast with the Mormon teaching that man had a pre-existent life before being put on this earth.

- "And **God created man** in His own image, in the image of God **He created him**; male and female **He created them**" (Genesis 1:27).
- "Thus declares the LORD who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and **forms the spirit of man within him**" (Zechariah. 12:1).

- "Thus says God the LORD, who created the heavens and stretched them out, who spread out the earth and its offspring, **who gives breath to the people on it and spirit to those who walk in it** " (Isaiah 42:5).
- "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit" (John 3:6).
- "But now, O LORD, You are our Father, we are the clay, and You our potter; and **all of us are the work of Your hand**" (Isaiah 64:8).

(iv) Answered a Question Regarding the LDS Church's Connection with Genealogy

### **TODAY'S LESSON OUTLINE: AUGUST 6, 2017**

Explore the Following Topics:

- (i) The LDS Church's Teaching on Salvation: Unconditional (General) and Conditional (Individual)
- (ii) The LDS Church's Teaching on the Three Kingdoms of Glory
- (iii) The LDS Church's Teaching on Eternal Progression

### **THE LESSON**

- (i) The LDS Church's Teaching on Salvation: Unconditional (General) and Conditional (Individual)
- (ii) The LDS Church's Teaching on the Three Kingdoms of Glory
- (iii) The LDS Church's Teaching on Eternal Progression

#### **(i) The LDS Church's Teaching on Salvation: Unconditional (General) and Conditional (Individual)**

##### A. Unconditional (General) Salvation

The LDS Church teaches that a "general salvation" will eventually come to all mankind, except a small number called the "sons of perdition". This general salvation is said to be by grace (i.e., salvation by grace alone), giving most people a resurrected body. In this sense, salvation is synonymous with immortality; it is the inseparable connection of body and spirit so that the resurrected person lives forever. Resurrected, but not necessarily coupled with gospel obedience (good works).

Note: The term "son of perdition" is used by professed Mormons to describe a person who had the true light of the restored gospel (taught by the LDS Church) revealed to them, but then they aligned themselves with Lucifer, entering into open rebellion. The term is often applied to former Mormons who speak out against the errors of Mormonism. Sons of perdition will go away into everlasting fire prepared for them so they will be in torment (II Nephi 9:13-16), per Mormon Doctrine, p 669.

##### B. Conditional (Individual) Salvation

Enables a person to dwell in the Celestial Kingdom where Heavenly Father and Jesus Christ are. It comes from grace (i.e., all things come from the grace of God) coupled with gospel obedience. This salvation requires faith, repentance, baptism, receipt of the Holy Ghost, and continued righteousness to the end of one's mortal life (Doctrine and Covenants 20:29; II Nephi 9:23-24). (see Mormon Doctrine, Bruce R. McConkie, pp. 669-671)

Enter into a discussion with a professed Mormon. Here is a question to initiate a conversation:

Q: As a member of the LDS church, are you keeping all of the commandments?

Most will reply with something like this "no one is perfect." But the idea that one can obtain perfection in the afterlife is not in line with the teaching of some LDS leaders. LDS prophet Spencer W. Kimball wrote that "Only as we overcome shall we become perfect and move toward godhood. As I have indicated previously, the time to do this is now, in mortality. Someone once said: 'A fellow who is planning to reform is one step behind. He ought to quit planning and get on with the job. Today is the day'" (Miracle of Forgiveness, Spencer W. Kimball, p. 210).

Further LDS statements on the topic of salvation:

"If it had not been for Joseph Smith and the restoration, there would be no salvation. There is no salvation outside the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" (*Doctrines of Salvation* vol. 2 pp. 1-350).

"...one of the untrue doctrines found in modern Christendom is the concept that man can gain salvation (meaning in the kingdom of God) by grace alone and without obedience. This soul-destroying doctrine has the obvious effect of lessening the determination of an individual to conform to all of the laws and ordinances of the gospel, such conformity being essential if the sought reward is in reality to be gained" (Mormon Doctrine p. 671).

"It is no secret that many false and vain and foolish things are being taught in the sectarian world and even among us about our need to gain a special relationship with the Lord Jesus....There are yet others who have an excessive zeal that causes them to go beyond the mark. Their desire for excellence is inordinate. In an effort to be truer than true they devote themselves to gaining a special, personal relationship with Christ that is both improper and perilous. I say perilous because this course, particularly in the lives of some who are spiritually immature, is a gospel hobby that creates an unwholesome holier-than-thou attitude. In other instances it leads to despondency because the seeker after perfection knows he is not living the way he supposes he should. Another peril is that those so involved often begin to pray directly to Christ because of some special friendship they feel has been developed" (What is our relationship to members of the Godhead?, Bruce R. McConkie of the Council of the Twelve at a BYU devotional March 2, 1982, Church News, week ending March 20, 1982, p.5).

### **What does the Bible Say?**

The Bible proclaims the importance of knowing Jesus and being His disciple...

"...if you confess with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved." As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." ...for "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved" (Romans 10:9-13).

"Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved..." (Acts 16:31).

"...through Jesus the forgiveness of sins is proclaimed to you. Through him everyone who believes is justified from everything you could not be justified from by the law of Moses (Acts 13:38-39).

"In reply Jesus declared, 'I tell you the truth, no one can see the kingdom of God unless he is born again.' 'How can a man be born again when he is old?' Nicodemus asked. 'Surely he cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb to be born!' Jesus replied, 'I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit. Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, 'You must be born again.' ...just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up, that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life. For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life" (John 3:3-16).

Note: This passage is not, as Mormonism teaches, referring to water baptism. "Water" is properly interpreted as meaning "flesh" or physical birth as when a woman's water breaks during child birth.

### **FAITH PLUS WORKS = SALVATION (MORMON/CONDITIONAL SALVATION)?**

Mormonism teaches that salvation is achieved through a mixture of faith and works. This is a concept that is condemned in the Bible: "...by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified." "...I do not make void the grace of God; for if righteousness comes by the law, then Christ is dead in vain" (Galatians 2:16; 21).

Either we must have lived perfect lives (from our very beginning) or we must humbly enter into a proper relationship with the One who is the perfect sinless man, who has lived a perfect life before God the Father!

The Bible states that "There is none righteous, no, not one" (Romans 3:10). It would be unwise to offer up our own flawed performance before God as entrance into His heavenly presence since, "...all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags..." (Isaiah 64:6). Christ alone and His sacrifice on the Cross must be our hope for salvation. Receive the gift of eternal life today (Romans 6:23).

"Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved. For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. For they, being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God" (Romans 10:1-3).

### **(ii) The LDS Church's Teaching on the Three Kingdoms of Glory**

LDS Church Teaching on the Three Kingdoms of Glory. The LDS Church teaches that there are three kingdoms of glory: the celestial kingdom, the terrestrial kingdom, and the telestial kingdom. The glory one will inherit will depend on the depth of his/her conversion, expressed by our obedience to the Lord's commandments. It will depend on the manner in which one has "received the testimony of Jesus." The LDS Church teaches that the three kingdoms are:

a) Celestial Kingdom (Highest Glory – the Third Heaven): The celestial kingdom is the highest of the three kingdoms of glory. Those in this kingdom will dwell forever in the presence of God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. They emphatically teach to their members that this is their life goal: to inherit celestial glory and to help others receive that great blessing as well. The LDS Church emphasizes that such a goal is not achieved in one attempt; it is the result of a lifetime of righteousness and constancy of purpose.

The celestial kingdom is the place prepared for those who have "received the testimony of Jesus" and been "made perfect through Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, who wrought out this perfect atonement through the shedding of his own blood" (see *Doctrine and Covenants*, specifically Section 76:51, 69; also Section 76:50-70; and Section 76:92-96.). To inherit this "gift," one must receive the ordinances of

salvation, keep the commandments, and repent of his/her sins. However, to inherit eternal life requires one's 'obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel' (see *Articles of Faith* 1:3).

The LDS Church teaches that in January 1836 their Prophet Joseph Smith received a revelation that expanded his understanding of the requirements to inherit celestial glory. Allegedly, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the celestial kingdom. He marveled when he saw his older brother Alvin there, even though Alvin had died before receiving the ordinance of baptism (see *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 137:1-6). Smith reported that the voice of the Lord came to him declaring, "All who have died without a knowledge of this gospel, who would have received it if they had been permitted to tarry, shall be heirs of the celestial kingdom of God; all that shall die henceforth without a knowledge of it, who would have received it with all their hearts, shall be heirs of that kingdom. "For I, the Lord, will judge all men according to their works, according to the desire of their hearts." Commenting on this revelation, the Smith said, "I also beheld that all children who die before they arrive at the years of accountability are saved in the celestial kingdom of heaven" (see *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 137:7-10).

From another held revelation reported by Smith, the LDS Church teaches that there are three degrees within the celestial (highest glory) kingdom. To be exalted in the highest degree and continue eternally in family relationships, the LDS Church asserts that one must enter into "the new and everlasting covenant of marriage" and be true to that covenant. In other words, temple marriage in an LDS Temple is a requirement for obtaining the highest degree of celestial glory (see *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 131:1-4). They further teach that all who are worthy to enter into the new and everlasting covenant of a temple marriage will have that opportunity, whether in this life or the next. This is because in a LDS Temple, Mormon couples have their marriage "sealed" for time and all eternity.

b) Terrestrial Kingdom (Middle Glory): The LDS Church asserts that those who inherit terrestrial glory will "receive of the presence of the Son, but not of the fullness of the Father. Wherefore, they are bodies terrestrial, and not bodies celestial, and differ in glory as the moon differs from the sun" (see *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 76:77-78). Generally speaking, individuals in the terrestrial kingdom will be honorable people "who were blinded by the craftiness of men" (see *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 76:75). The LDS Church teaches that this group will include members of the LDS Church who were "not valiant in the testimony of Jesus" (see *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 76:79). It will also include those who rejected the opportunity to receive the gospel in mortality (i.e., while alive in a physical body on earth), but who later received it (i.e., the gospel) in the post-mortal spirit world (see *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 76:71-80, 91, 97).

c) Telestial Kingdom (Lowest Glory): The LDS Church instructs that telestial glory will be reserved for individuals who "received not the gospel of Christ, neither the testimony of Jesus" (see *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 76:82). These individuals will receive their glory after being redeemed from spirit prison, which is sometimes called hell (see *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 76:81-90, 98-106, 109-112).

The LDS Church further acclaims that some people will not be worthy to dwell in any kingdom of glory. They will be called "the sons of perdition" and will have to "abide a kingdom which is not a kingdom of glory" (see *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 76:32; 88:24). This will be the state of "those who know [God's] power, and have been made partakers thereof, and suffered themselves through the power of the devil to be overcome, and to deny the truth and defy [God's] power" (see *Doctrine and Covenants*, Section 76:30-49). On a related note, the LDS Church believes Lucifer (i.e., Satan) was Jesus' brother, back on the original earth, where God and Jesus dwelled. They support this claim by because they teach that we were all spirit children together with God in the "pre-existence" (i.e., before mortality).

### **What Does the Bible Say About Heaven?**

Heaven is a real place described in the Bible. The word "heaven" is found 276 times in the New Testament alone. Scripture refers to three heavens. The apostle Paul was "caught up to the third heaven," but he was prohibited from revealing what he experienced there (II Corinthians 12:1-9).

If a third heaven exists, there must also be two other heavens. The first is most frequently referred to in the Old Testament as the "sky" or the "firmament." This is the heaven that contains clouds, the area that birds fly through. The second heaven is interstellar/outer space, which is the abode of the stars, planets, and other celestial objects (Genesis 1:14-18).

The third heaven, the specific location of which is not revealed, is the dwelling place of God. Jesus promised to prepare a place for true Christians in heaven (John 14:2). Heaven is also the destination of Old Testament saints who died trusting God's promise of the Redeemer (Ephesians 4:8). Whoever believes in Christ shall never perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).

The apostle John was privileged to see and report on the heavenly city (Revelation 21:10-27). John witnessed that heaven (the new earth) possesses the "glory of God" (Revelation 21:11), the very presence of God. Because heaven has no night and the Lord Himself is the light, the sun and moon are no longer needed (Revelation 22:5).

The city is filled with the brilliance of costly stones and crystal clear jasper. Heaven has twelve gates (Revelation 21:12) and twelve foundations (Revelation 21:14). The paradise of the Garden of Eden is restored: the river of the water of life flows freely and the tree of life is available once again, yielding fruit monthly with leaves that "heal the nations" (Revelation 22:1-2). However eloquent John was in his description of heaven, the reality of heaven is beyond the ability of finite man to describe (1 Corinthians 2:9).

Heaven is a place of "no mores." There will be no more tears, no more pain, and no more sorrow (Revelation 21:4). There will be no more separation, because death will be conquered (Revelation 20:6). The best thing about heaven is the presence of our Lord and Savior (1 John 3:2). We will be face to face with the Lamb of God who loved us and sacrificed Himself so that we can enjoy His presence in heaven for eternity.

### **(iii) Explore/Answer Some Key Questions:**

#### **(1) Does the LDS Church Teach that Jesus and Lucifer Were Brothers?**

The LDS Church teaches..."The appointment of Jesus to be the Savior of the world was contested by one of the other sons of God. He was called Lucifer. This spirit-brother of Jesus desperately tried to become the Savior of mankind." Milton R. Hunter, The Gospel Through the Ages, p. 15.

"The head God called together the Gods and sat in grand council to bring forth the world...In the beginning, the head of the Gods called a council of the gods; and they came together and concocted a plan to create the world and people it." (Joseph Smith, Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, pp. 348, 349)

"The contention in heaven was...Jesus said there would be certain souls that would not be saved; and the Devil said he could save them all, and laid his plans before the grand council, who gave their vote in favor of Jesus Christ. So the Devil rose up in rebellion against God, and was cast down, with all who put up their heads for him." (Joseph Smith, Journal of Discourses, Vol. 6, page 8.

THE BIBLE: The real JESUS is the only begotten Son and is God the Son (John 1:1-14). Satan was a created angel, not a son of God (Isaiah 14:12). Jesus created all things and in Him the fullness of God dwells! (Colossians 1:15-20; Philippians 2:5-11; Hebrews 1:1-13)

(2) Does the LDS Church Teach that the LDS Church is the Only True Church?

The LDS Church teaches..."I was answered that I must join none of them, for they were all wrong; and the personage who addressed me said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; and those professors were all corrupt." Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith 2:19.

"This Church is the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth." Doctrine and Covenants 1:30. "There is no salvation outside the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." McConkie, Mormon Doctrine, p. 670. "All other churches are entirely destitute of all authority from God; and any person who receives Baptism or the Lord's Supper from their hands will highly offend God; for He looks upon them as the most corrupt of all people. Both Catholics and Protestants are nothing less than the whore of Babylon." Orson Pratt, The Seer, p. 255.

THE BIBLE: The CHURCH is the spiritual body of Christians with Jesus at its head. That is the true church is not an organization! (Ephesians 1:22-23, 4:11-16; I Corinthians 1:2, 12:12; Matthew 16:18).

## **CONCLUSION**

Professed LDS Church members are sincere about what they believe from what their church teaches them. Pray for them and ask them questions about their beliefs. Show compassion toward them like any other unregenerated person needing to hear and see the truth of the gospel. They are eternal souls. ILLUSTRATION. Sticker on the back of our vehicles – Utah – Life Elevated. Tourism.

## **WHICH BIBLE SHOULD YOU USE?**

The *Book of Mormon* declares that the Bible has been deliberately altered (see 1 Nephi 13:26-28). Mormons will often point to all the different translations of the Bible as proof that it has been changed. You can ask them something like:

- Does translation always lessen scripture's value or change its teaching?
- What about the Book of Mormon? How many translations have been made of it? Is it less reliable in French or German?
- Does the church put a disclaimer on the Book of Mormon in other languages as they do with the Bible? If not, why not?
- If professional LDS translators can reliably take the English Book of Mormon into French, why can't professional translators take the Greek New Testament into English?
- If the Bible is in such bad shape, which verses are wrong, so I won't use them?

Professed Mormons will often claim the Bible is incomplete, that various books have been left out of our current Bible. So, you may ask them:

- Why doesn't your prophet restore the lost books or correct the translation?
- If your prophet has not felt the need to restore these missing books of the Bible how important can they be?
- Which books were left out? Which ones should be added?



- Joseph Smith did a revised version of the Bible, why doesn't the LDS Church print it? They print extracts from it at the back of their Bible—why not use the whole thing? Smith did not add any lost books to his revision. In fact, he left out the book Song of Solomon.

Remind them that even though we do not have all of the words of Jesus, John assured us that we have all that we need to know about gaining eternal life (see [John 20:30-31](#)). Also, Jesus promised "Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away." (Matthew 24:35)

If Mormonism is a restoration of original Christianity they would need to demonstrate that LDS doctrines were originally in the Bible but later deleted. However, there is no manuscript evidence of revisions of the New Testament that eliminated cardinal doctrines. Also, the scripture quotes in the writings of the early church fathers show that there were no doctrinal changes. A good book on the reliability of the Bible is *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?*, by F.F. Bruce.

### **MORE ON ETERNAL LIFE DISCUSSIONS WITH PROFESSED LDS**

The LDS Church teaches that in order to gain eternal life (as opposed to merely entering heaven) one must be "worthy." It is achieved after a life of full activity in Mormonism, full tithing, temple marriage, etc. So a question to ask your friend is:

- What is required to achieve eternal life in Mormonism?
- Have you met all of those requirements?
- If you died today do you know that you will have eternal life?

Point out that the Christian has the assurance of eternal life through faith in Christ, not church activity (see 1 John 5:13).

### **WHERE DO YOU GO FROM HERE?**

Remember that your life is already a witness to your LDS friends, one way or another. If they say you would make a good Mormon, take comfort. Your lifestyle is seen to be consistent with your claim to be a Christian, they just want to give you the rest of the gospel.

Challenge them to study the Bible (Acts 17:11-12). If Mormonism is a restoration of Christ's church, it will agree with what God has already revealed. Challenge them to think for themselves. Truth will stand up to investigation.

A Mormon quickly senses if you are talking from genuine concern and conviction, or if you just want an argument. Check your motives and attitude (see 2 Tim. 2:23-26 and Titus 3:2-9). As ambassadors for Christ we are to share His love and redemption.

"Always be full of joy in the Lord; ... Let everyone see that you are unselfish and considerate in all you do." (Philippians 4:4-5, *Living Bible*)

Here is a "generic" letter that was written (and the final version sent) by a couple leaving the LDS Church. They wrote the letter to the LDS Church leadership in their local ward and stake:

(name)  
(address)  
(date)  
Bishop \_\_\_\_\_  
Stake President \_\_\_\_\_

Dear Sirs:

In an effort to avoid some of the expected heartaches ahead, and to squelch forthcoming rumors, we are sending you this letter. This is to inform you that as of Sunday, (Date?), we are terminating our membership in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints. We request the permanent removal of both of our names from church membership records.

We understand there may be a thirty day church-prescribed waiting period. If possible, please waive this condition and process our request as soon as possible. We also request that the term "*excommunication*" not be used in any way regarding this matter since we are voluntarily leaving the LDS church. After this process is complete, please send us written confirmation stating that our membership was terminated at our request and for no other reason.

We want our friends and family in the LDS church to know that our decision to leave the church has nothing to do with the people, or personalities, or any "sin" on our part. Our decision is based solely on our conclusion that we now believe the Book of Mormon is *not real history about real people*. We believe it is a nineteenth century work of fiction produced by Joseph Smith, Jr. The Book of Mormon is called the "keystone" of the LDS religion. Consequently, when that keystone failed, Mormonism came down with it, crumbling to the ground in a heap of rubble.

In our studies, we have found it impossible to ignore certain facts regarding this book, some of which include: impossible population growth, conclusive DNA proof that the "principal ancestors" of the Native American people were of Asian descent, zero archeology, wrong plants and animals, steelmaking, language issue, the eyebrow-raising translation process, etc. . .

For a long time, we believed, in spite of overwhelming evidence to the contrary. Perhaps we could have continued our walk with the Latter Day Saints had these been the only problems we encountered. Then we had to wrestle with the numerous "first vision" accounts, the Adam/God teachings, polygamy, racism, Joseph's numerous affairs, magic, occultism, masonry/temple connection, and finally, his dying in a gun battle with the Masonic distress call on his lips and his magic Jupiter talisman still in his pocket. Despite the bleak picture this painted, we still believed.

B.H. Roberts's loss of faith in the Book of Mormon as expressed in his 400 page manuscript, "Book of Mormon Difficulties," helped seal the book's fate for us. Also, the fact that "Mormonism" or "the fullness of the gospel," is not even contained in the Book of Mormon. Doctrinal conflicts with the Bible came later as Joseph became bolder. We now reject all of the church's non-biblical teachings. We especially reject any dilution of Christ's sacred atonement, such as the offensive doctrine of "blood atonement," as if we could "add to" what the Savior has already done for us. When hanging on the cross, "He declared, '*It is finished*'" (in Greek, literally meaning: '*Paid in full...*'")

In all sincerity, we have wondered why the Book of Abraham is *still* accepted as LDS scripture. It has been proven beyond any doubt to *not* be a 4000 year old document written by the hand of Abraham, nor is it a record of anything remotely Christian. The fact remains that it is a 2000 year old common Egyptian funeral document. It is inexplicable to suggest that pagan priests would have "woven" or "hidden" in a coded manner, Abraham's true gospel knowledge among their false teachings. As far back as 1970, the RLDS church dumped it and pronounced it as "simply the product of Joseph Smith's imagination. . . ." Utah Mormons should have done the same.

For us, the Book of Abraham disclosure was the lethal blow to our testimonies about Joseph's prophetic calling or abilities. For years we just never took a close look at it, thinking Professor, Hugh Nibley, had it under control. We figured that he was much smarter than us and he's fine with it. It must be OK. Granted, we're not scholars as he was, but we are smart enough to know when there's a trout in our milk! At this stage of our letter, it seems almost pointless to continue on and mention other hurdles like the white Lamanite warrior, "Zelph," the six foot tall Quaker-dressed moon men, or the Kinderhook deception.

In the end, we must agree with Thomas Ferguson's conclusion. Disillusioned after searching more than 25 years for archeological evidence to validate the Book of Mormon, he was forced "to admit that the case against Joseph Smith was absolutely devastating and could not be explained away." Another writer, who reported on the Joseph Smith papyri affair, concluded that "even the most devastating acts of disconfirmation will have no effect whatever on true believers. . . . Why? Because cultural Mormons, of course, do not believe in the historical authenticity of Mormon scriptures in the first place. So there is nothing to disconfirm."

His observation became apparent to us as we sought answers to some tough questions. Alternative theories to what the Book of Mormon declares abound among our trusted, well-informed Mormon friends and family. Frankly, their heartfelt 'spins' were dizzying. We, however, are weary of it all and can no longer pretend to believe. If you or anyone would like to discuss any of these things further, *know that you are always welcome in our home*. But our decision to exit the church is final. Also, know that we hold no ill feelings or antagonism toward the church or anyone in it. We are painfully aware of how our decision will alter our relationships with all of our LDS friends, neighbors, co-workers, and family members.

Finally, we are aware that most members who leave the LDS church become atheists and abandon God altogether. This is not the case with us. It is precisely because we believe we *have* found Christ that we take each others hand and confidently make this giant leap into Christianity. We are already attending a thriving, bible-based Christian church, here in Orem. It was only after we removed the "Joseph Smith filter" from our minds and simply read the Holy Bible that our eyes were opened to the Good News about Jesus Christ. We believe in the biblical doctrines of grace, the atonement, and eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ as taught plainly in the New Testament. For us, Christ is enough!

For the reasons listed above, we hereby resign our membership in the LDS church.

Sincerely,  
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