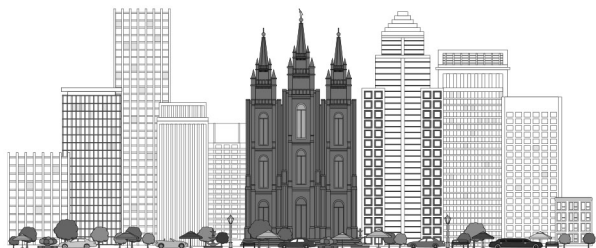




SHARING THE GOSPEL



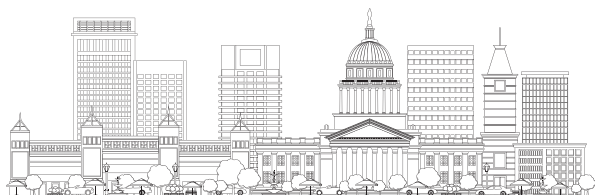
WITH A
MORMON



TONY BROWN

10 Publishing

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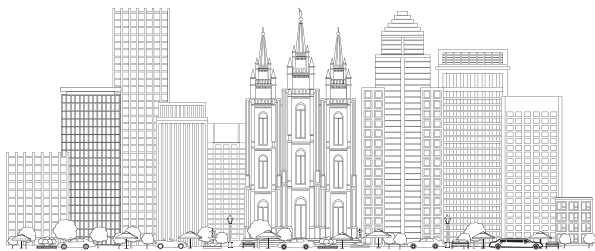


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INTRODUCTION:

SPEAKING THE TRUTH IN LOVE



I love Mormons. I find myself strangely drawn to them. They are some of the kindest, hardest-working, most helpful and honourable people you could ever meet. They value what I value. They are moral and upright, love their families and have a real desire to serve God. Your question following my declared love for them may be: So, why are you not a Mormon?

The answer is this: Though I love Mormons, I do not love Mormonism.

IT'S NOT CHRISTIANITY

Mormonism is much like the military. It can take a person and smarten them up. By following its dictates, a person can discover a sense of purpose, live by a moral code, feel valuable and find themselves part of a bigger, close-knit community. But there is something Mormonism cannot do – it cannot save.

In this brief look at what Mormonism teaches, we will see that it is as far from orthodox, historic, biblical Christianity as it could possibly be. Therefore, as lovely as they can be, Mormons are a lost people who need to hear, and respond to, the real gospel. As we seek to communicate the way of salvation with them, we need to *speak the truth in love*. By doing so, we can show them that we are not anti-Mormon (a term they use against any who challenge them), but are anti-Mormonism.

My prayer is that this book will not only give you information and tools to use as you speak to them, but will also generate within you a love for the people we call Mormons.

THE PEOPLE FORMERLY KNOWN AS MORMONS



... for I contend that the Latter-day Saints are the only good and true Christians, that I know anything about in the world. There are a good many people who profess to be Christians, but they are not founded on the foundation that Jesus Christ himself has laid (Joseph Fielding Smith).¹

MORMON MISSIONARIES

You can usually spot Mormons who knock at your door. They will be two smartly dressed young men, wearing suits, white shirts and ties. With their clean-cut images and a tidy haircut, they will also often, though not exclusively, have American accents. If you are still unsure who they are, check their name badges. Though typically aged between eighteen and twenty-five, they are inexplicably called 'Elder'. This badge identifies them as missionaries for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

TIP:

Though more commonly known by the nickname 'Mormons', which has stuck since the 1800s, they refer to themselves as Latter-day Saints, or 'LDS' for short. In 2018 President Russell M. Nelson announced that God had told him the Church should drop the moniker 'Mormons'.

Despite LDS missionaries usually being young men, they can also be female – 'Sisters' (who the

Mormon leadership has decided will typically be aged between nineteen and twenty-five) – or an older retired couple.

To ‘serve a mission’ for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is like a rite of passage for young Mormons. Parents hope that their children will heed the call and make them proud, proving themselves faithful to the only true and living Church of Jesus Christ on the earth today. Though spoken of as a choice, there is a certain amount of pressure applied to help you make the ‘right’ decision:

We affirm that missionary work is a priesthood duty – and we encourage all young men who are worthy and who are physically able and mentally capable to respond to the call to serve. Many young women also serve, but they are not under the same mandate to serve as are the young men. We assure the young sisters of the Church, however, that they make a valuable contribution as missionaries, and we welcome their service (Thomas S. Monson).²

THE MISSION SHOULD YOU CHOOSE TO ACCEPT IT

The ‘mission’ to which these young people hope to be called will be costly. It will require men to spend two years separated from their families, and women to spend eighteen months away from home. The funding for the mission must be raised by these young people themselves. There are also certain requirements of ‘personal worthiness’ that must be met, meaning that not every young LDS member can serve a mission even if they would like to do so. Those who go on mission must:

- Have faith in and a testimony of Heavenly Father; His Son, Jesus Christ; and the Holy Ghost
- Have a testimony of the Atonement of Jesus Christ and His role as the Saviour
- Have a testimony of the Prophet Joseph Smith and the restoration of the gospel
- Sustain the church authorities
- Keep the law of chastity (including avoiding pornography in any form)

- Keep the covenants made at baptism and elsewhere
- Attend all their church meetings
- Be honest in their dealings with others
- Pay a full tithing
- Keep the Word of Wisdom (a health code which, amongst other things, forbids them to drink tea and coffee)

TIP:

The Mormon name for God the Father is 'Heavenly Father'.

If young people pass this 'worthiness' test, they then eagerly await the letter of confirmation to drop through their letterbox. This will tell them where in the world they will serve as a missionary for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

MISSION IMPOSSIBLE

Wherever a young missionary is sent in the world, their first stopping-off point will be a Missionary Training Centre (MTC). Would-be

missionaries spend around three weeks there, but longer if they need to learn a new language.

The key learning manual whilst at an MTC is called *Preach My Gospel*. This document begins by saying that the aim of a missionary is to: 'Invite others to come unto Christ by helping them receive the restored gospel through faith in Jesus Christ and His Atonement, repentance, baptism, receiving the gift of the Holy Ghost, and enduring to the end.'

Notice here words peculiar to Mormonism: they believe theirs is a 'restored' gospel. They teach that after the death of the apostles, the church became apostate and, hence, lost its authority. God 'restored' this authority to the church through the Prophet Joseph Smith. Therefore, they maintain the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints alone has God's blessing and authority.

One implication of this is that if you are a baptised Christian who converts to Mormonism (I urge you not to do that), your previous baptism will be seen as invalid. You will need to be baptised by someone who has the proper 'priesthood authority'. Their Articles of Faith describes baptism as the first saving ordinance

of the gospel (Article 1:4). It is through baptism and confirmation by priesthood authority that someone becomes a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

PRIESTHOOD AUTHORITY?

Mormon doctrine teaches that this priesthood is the power and authority of God given to man. A priesthood holder in the church has the authority both to perform ordinances and to act as a church leader.

Mormon history teaches that the Aaronic priesthood was given to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery by John the Baptist. Shortly thereafter, the Melchizedek priesthood was conferred upon Joseph Smith by the apostles Peter, James and John. These two priesthoods were then passed down through Joseph Smith to other males within the group. Currently, qualified males aged twelve or older can receive the Aaronic priesthood, and qualified males who are eighteen or older can receive the Melchizedek priesthood.

However, the Bible tells us that Jesus is our priest:

Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:14–16).

TIP:

The book of Hebrews says that we need only one Priest – the Lord Jesus Christ.

PREACH MY GOSPEL

The *Preach My Gospel* manual is an evangelistic tool used by the missionaries. Their hope is that people will agree to five study sessions with them in which they will cover the following themes:

1. The message of the restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ
2. The plan of salvation

3. The gospel of Jesus Christ
4. The commandments
5. Laws and ordinances

The topics build upon each other, with the missionaries seeking to convince people that the Church of Jesus Christ is the one true church. Throughout their presentations, Mormon missionaries will encourage the potential convert to do the following:

- Read the Book of Mormon
- Pray about the Book of Mormon
- Be baptised into the Mormon Church

THE BOOK OF MORMON

It will not take the missionaries long to introduce you to the Book of Mormon. They will be especially keen to show you, and have you read, Moroni 10:3–5:

Behold, I would exhort you that when ye shall read these things, if it be wisdom in God that ye should read them, that ye would remember