

## Mormonism (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints)

### **History**

A man named Joseph Smith of New York in 1820 founded this cult. This is also the time that supposedly God the Father and Jesus Christ came to see Joseph Smith in a vision and was told that he should not join any of the Christian Churches because they are all wrong and that God the Father was not happy with any of them. Due to this experience Joseph Smith in 1830 began the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (Mormons).

Joseph Smith was heavily into practices of the Occult which included seer stones, crystal gazing, diving rod, and those of the like in order to find treasures that were buried in the ground. Smith was known around his town as a conman and a liar, not being very trustworthy at all. This was one of the factors that led him to leave the town and why his organization/church did not grow much there.

From New York Smith went to Ohio and then from Ohio into Illinois before he was killed in a revolt at a prison in Illinois. Mormons believe him to be a martyr yet he was fighting to his death killing and injuring prison guards before being fatally wounded himself.

Mormonism grew during a time where a lot of people were looking for answers that it seemed most Protestant churches couldn't provide. (Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, LDS henceforth) seemed to and still do for a lot answer those questions that most evangelicals don't answer. Some of the popular ones deal with life after death and Hell, salvation being for all, and how if they are the restoration church how things seem to line up with the church during the time of the Apostles. LDS is not a bunch of ill-informed, gullible, unintelligent people but instead are a group of people that see the claims of the LDS as being reasonable and believable. This must be kept in mind when we talk with them and when we try to witness to them. They believe what they do because it makes sense to them and seems very reasonable and why doubt something that does all that for you.

After Smith was killed in Illinois Brigham Young headed the LDS up. Brigham got a "prophecy" saying that they should move out to Utah, the west back then, and start their own community. After a grueling trip over the mountains they Mormon followers finally made it to the Salt Lake Valley and pitched camp. Here they thrived being by themselves and continued to proselytize all those that came around. At one time though the LDS church was responsible for the massacre of about 100 settlers in the area that did not want to join the LDS faith. It took many years and finally the LDS pinned it, or made John Brown the scapegoat, supposedly freeing them from any involvement corporately with the killing. Brown himself disagrees with that statement and believed he was working with the approval of Brigham when the massacre occurred. John Brown was excommunicated from the church but later re-instituted by the apostles and governing body after many years of the massacre being forgotten and a political mess not being on their doorstep.

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Brigham Young did much to solidify the doctrines of the LDS and followed nicely in the footsteps of Smith. At this point in time the faith of the LDS Church and all of the theology that most would hold to today be put into regular practice or upheld. Some of the theologies/practices include, baptism for the dead, blood atonement, temple rituals, polygamy, etc.

Today I consider this organization one of the most frightening and scary cults that are out there. About 80% of all their converts come from a Christian background. This would make sense because of them supposedly being the “restoration” of the true Christianity one must have some prior knowledge of what Christianity is in order to believe what they have to say. One of the main reasons why Mormons can deceive so many Christians is due to a lack of knowledge in basic doctrinal/Biblical beliefs (especially salvation, deity of Christ, God, Holy Spirit, Man, etc.). We as Christians need to take serious learning our Bible and studying the Scriptures in order to prove ourselves when the test comes (2Timothy 2:15). The only way we will be able to curve some of the growth of the LDS Church, which in a couple of years could have close to 400,000 full time missionaries; this outnumbers Protestant and Catholic missionaries combined, is if we ask questions and seek to learn more of the Bible and what God has instilled into it.

### **Why People Join the Mormon Faith**

Why do people join the Mormon Church? This is a question that many Christians ask after they have been exposed to some of the claims of Mormonism. This is a very fair question that does demand an answer, and yet most of the time one is not provided. People first of all join the Mormon Church because they have at least a little bit of an idea concerning the Bible and Christianity in general. This is true because one must have a little bit of ok biblical knowledge in order to understand how Mormonism is the “true religion” and the restoration of the apostate church.

Beyond that there are many great reasons for why people join including: the family emphasis, answers some of the problems concerning the end of the world, answers questions on who God is and how he works, solves the problem of evil, etc. The thing that we as Christians must remember is that there are no stupid people that join the LDS church but instead very smart and bright people. Back when the cult was first founded many great people were converted because what was being said made sense to them and seemed rational, and we can find a similar attitude today. If this doesn't seem to help you can always ask them why they joined and believe what they do. This can be very helpful in knowing how to witness to a Mormon if you can understand why they chose to believe what they do. We must remember that to most if not all Mormons, and other cults as well, people join because of a couple reasons; 1) the Christian church is not doing a good job of teaching the Bible and fulfilling its job, 2) emphasis on family and being good people, 3) what the cult is saying make sense and seems both logical and reasonable to believe.

Other things to remember about Mormons will be provided in the Witnessing section a little later on in the handout.

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### Organizational Structure

Temple-There are over 50 temples across the U.S and overseas. The most of the temples is the Salt Lake City, and Hawaii temples. To make it to the highest heaven a Mormon needs to be admitted into the temple. However, only about 25% all Mormons will make it inside a temple.

Area Churches-Similar to normal churches and is probably a place where local bible studies and fellowship take place on a regular basis. We have one just down the street from us.

Bishops-Similar to a Bishop in the Catholic Church. They are authority figures over a certain area of the church. They represent the doctrines and rules that the LDS church wants to be enforced, very first step in joining the power structure of the church. The Bishop is a volunteer position and each church building has one bishop. Very similar as well to our Senior Pastor.

Brethren-Council of men in Salt Lake and act as the governing body for the Church. They make rules and repeal rules, as they would like, they are very powerful men within the church and also outside the churches walls.

Council of Twelve (Apostles)-These twelve men are the “special advisors” in one sense to the president/prophet of the LDS Church. From these twelve when the president resigns/dies a new president will be picked. Enormous power and possibly wealth is in the hands of these 12. Most were very successful businessmen/politicians before making it into this rank of church officials.

President (Prophet) The modern voice of God as Mormons would tell you, what he says is the Word of the Lord and is taken as being absolute truth regardless of what was said on a previous date. Has the most amount of power in the Church. The current president is Gordon B. Hinckley. They have had only 15 presidents/prophets starting with Joseph Smith as the first one dating up to the present.

Financial Holdings-The church is one of the wealthiest corporations and companies in the whole world. They have massive land holdings in many states and in Florida actually outnumber the Walt Disney World Land 10:1. They also own part of the Marriott Hotel chain and the companies underneath that as well. Members of the church give \$7.5 million a day to the church. The church also rolls over \$1-2 billion dollars in just stock alone. No one person truly knows just how much the organization is worth or what they bring in a year.

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### Doctrines of the Mormon (LDS) Church

Salvation-Within the Mormon faith you have two separate forms of salvation; general and personal. Christ dying on the cross for the whole world accomplished general salvation, thus every person can be saved but in essence all won't be saved. Special salvation comes only through the LDS Church and its rules and regulations. They add onto faith both works and baptism. This goes against the Word of God in many areas. Within personal salvation there are at least three levels a Mormon wants to attain. The highest form of personal salvation is accomplished by being married into the temple and keeping the exact doctrines as Joseph Smith and Brigham Young such as polygamy and blood atonement. The middle of personal salvation comes by just being able to go through the temple rituals but not married, and the lowest level for the Mormon is just being a Mormon and not making it into the temple. All of us other are stuck on a different "heaven" in the end times.

Blood Atonement-This is a doctrine of the Mormon Church that basically states that there are some sins and acts of the human being that Christ's blood did not cover on Calvary. This means that your own blood must be shed in order to have forgiveness. Members who go against the church, convert from the church, and other things of the like may be requested by a family member to have blood atonement carried out in order for them to be saved. This doctrine was still being carried out as of a couple of years ago.

God-God the Father is just one of many gods that exist in the cosmos. He created the earth out of preexisting material not out of nothing, as the Bible would support. God is having sex in heaven and has spirit children all around him. God has a physical body just like we do and at one time was a man just like us. Some Mormons, but not all, would say that because God was once a man and is now a god then there is hope for me to become a god as well. God had two children in particular, Lucifer (Satan) and Jesus Christ.

Jesus Christ-Came to earth and was conceived by Mary having sex with God the father, no longer a virgin birth. He lived a perfect life and died on the cross in order that we may have the chance to become saved. However, his blood does not cover all sins and so other doctrines have been added to deal with that. Jesus did not have a physical resurrection but an immortalized one and provides that all will be raised again. The one thing that the death and resurrection of Christ did not do was defeat for good death and sin.

When we go to the pearly gates and are judged to see if we get into heaven, as the Mormons believe, Jesus, God the Father, and Joseph Smith are there and the final word rests with Joseph Smith. Jesus is a lower human and doesn't play as big of a part in getting to heaven as Joseph Smith does.

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Heaven-For men heaven is a place where you get to have sexual intercourse all the time and make spirit children that will eventually make it to earth. For women heaven is a place where you are pregnant the whole time having babies. See salvation on how to get to the various levels of heaven, also see the handout that shows the heavens. For women you are also very much dependent on your husband to remember your name when he gets to heaven in order for you to make it there yourself.

Trinity-The believe in the trinity as long as it deals with the fact that God is actually three different people and not one person with three distinct functions. This helps them to get the plurality of gods.

### **Refuting Their Doctrine**

#### **Witnessing to a Mormon**

You are always a witness to a Mormon so make sure that your actions depict the kind of love that you will be talking to them about.

Always have a Mormon completely define what they mean by a term and do the same for them. Repeat back in your own words what they are saying in order to ensure that you truly understand what they are talking about.

Besides your actions showing your love try the best your concern for their eternal destination. This can be hard for someone to do because it isn't as tangible as other ways.

Always use your Bible with the Mormons, if they dispute you using it then just ask them if they consider themselves to be the "restoration church". Most Mormons will say that they are and therefore if they are the restoration church they will agree with the Bible.

#### Focus on God

- Only one true God

- God was never and will never be a human, he is and always will be just God

- God is Spirit.

#### Focus on Christ

- Jesus was not a human and then because of what he did became a god but instead was God and then became a human.

- Jesus came primarily to save men not to provide the opportunity for them to be saved or to provide resurrection for all.

#### Focus on Salvation

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- Every person is lost, doomed to hell.
- We cannot save ourselves and earn our way to heaven.
- Salvation is a free gift from God through Jesus Christ is Son

### **Witness from the Book of Mormon**

There is only one true God (Alma 11:28-29,38-39)

God is unchanging (Mormon 9:9-11; Moroni 7:22)

God is Spirit (Alma 18:24-28, 33-34; 22:9-11)

God is Triune (2 Nephi 31:21 and also you can look at the last sentence of “The Testimony of Three Witnesses” in the *Book of Mormon*.)