



## Session 4 -- Mormonism

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### Who Are Mormons?

We'll start by asking the question, "Who are Mormons?" I trust we realize what a broad question that is. If I were to ask "Who are Muslims?" or even "Who are Baptists?" or "Who are Presbyterians?" you would immediately realize not all Muslims or Baptists or Presbyterians are the same.

But just as there are foundational teachings that unite Muslims together and Baptists together and Presbyterians together, there are foundational teachings that unite Mormons together. So Mormons comprise what is known as The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, often referred to with the acrostic LDS. How did they get that name, Latter-Day Saints? Well, Mormons believe that members of the New Testament church were called saints—which is certainly biblical language. We see that in Acts 9 and Ephesians 2:

*Now as Peter went here and there among them all, he came down also to the saints who lived at Lydda (Acts 9:32).*

*So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God... (Ephesians 2:19).*

But then Mormons teach that total apostasy overcame the church following the apostles. Apostasy basically means abandonment of the faith or renouncing of the faith. So after the apostles, who were known as the "Former-Day Saints," there was apostasy until the Mormon Church was founded in 1830, claiming to be the restored church. So to read from the official LDS website, which talks about the Great Apostasy which occurred after the Savior established His church:

*After the death of the Savior and His apostles, men corrupted the principles of the gospel, made unauthorized changes in church organization and priesthood ordinances. Because of this widespread apostasy, the Lord withdrew the authority of the priesthood from the earth. This apostasy lasted until the heavenly Father and His beloved Son appeared to Joseph Smith and initiated the restoration of the fullness of the gospel.*

Which leads to that critical feature of a cult: the teacher. Mormonism is based on the teachings of Joseph Smith, the first president and prophet of the LDS. Smith was born in rural Vermont in 1805, then moved with his family to New York. Most of his family became Presbyterians. Personally, he leaned more toward Methodism. But he was bothered by variations in Christianity: denominations, distinctions, which one was right, how do you choose? At a revival meeting, a preacher quoted from James 1:5 that if you lack wisdom, you should ask God and He will give it to you. So Smith, who was 14 years old at the time, went home, thought about those words, then went into the woods to pray. This led to his first vision at age 14 of two personages. This is foundational for the Mormon faith.

He claimed to see two personages. One of them, “God the Father,” pointed to “Jesus,” the second personage, and said, “This is My Son: hear Him.” Smith then asked them, “Which sect should I join?” And they said, “None. They’re all wrong. They’re all corrupt and their creeds are apostate.”

Then three years later, Smith had another vision of the angel Moroni, who told him of golden plates written in hieroglyphics that were buried under a hill. Smith found them and Smith translated the writings with what he called two “reading crystals.” Those writings later became the Book of Mormon, containing the story of lost Israelites who migrated to America in the 6th century B.C. but were killed in battle in A.D. 428.

Smith then received another vision from John the Baptist, making him a priest. That same year, 1830, Smith founded the Church of Christ, later known as the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. That name change officially happened in 1838.

After this, Smith continued to receive revelations telling him to move from New York to Ohio to Missouri, and eventually to Illinois, where the founder and his followers built the town of Nauvoo. They tried to live a utopian vision of society. They instituted polygyny. The early Mormon leaders believed Jesus had many wives—so they took many wives.

Smith and his brother were arrested in 1844. Smith was actually arrested many different times for many different crimes, including fraud. As you can imagine, LDS historians and other historians disagree over whether or not he was ever guilty of any of those crimes. But after this arrest in 1844, a mob later stormed the jail and killed both Smith and his brother. Mormons consider Smith a martyr; others say Smith died in a violent shoot-out.

Regardless, when Smith died a schism split the Mormon church. A small group of Josephites became the Reorganized Church with headquarters in Missouri, while most people followed Brigham Young as their first president and prophet. He took the followers to Utah in 1847 and built Salt Lake City, which is why Salt Lake City has such a large population of Mormons today.

But it’s not just Salt Lake City. Today Mormons claim over 16 million members and 30,000 congregations worldwide. There are over 9 million members in North America and over 70,000 missionaries around the world, most of whom are students, which we’ll return to in a minute.

Just to drill down more specifically regarding Mormons in the United States, they display a high level of commitment. One study found that 67% of Mormons are highly involved in their congregations, compared with 43% among evangelical Protestants; 91% believe the Bible is the Word of God, 85% pray every day, 84% say religion is very important in their lives and 77% read Scripture regularly.

Interestingly, from 2007 to 2014, the number of Mormons in the United States remained roughly the same, whereas in the same time period the number of people who identify as Christians dropped by 8%. Now this is key. If you were to speak with someone who is a Mormon, 97% would say Mormonism is a Christian religion. So almost all Mormons would identify themselves as Christians.

That's obviously key. If you remember, one of the key components we discussed about cults is that they claim to be in harmony with Christianity. A Mormon would not call Mormonism a cult. They would be offended by the implication that they are a group which deviates from foundational Christian teaching. If anything, a Mormon would say the exact opposite—that they've actually restored Christian teaching.

Mormons also make various other claims. Ninety-seven percent believe the president of the LDS church is a prophet of God; 91% believe the Book of Mormon was written by ancient prophets; 95% believe that families can be bound together eternally through temple ceremony; and 94% of Mormons believe that God the Father and Jesus Christ are separate physical beings. That is huge.

## **What Do Mormons Believe?**

This takes us to our next key question: what do Mormons believe? Keeping in mind what we said earlier about how Mormonism came into being, after 1,700 years of false teaching in the church Mormons espouse pretty exclusive claims. To quote from LDS.org:

The gospel of Jesus Christ was lost from the earth through the apostasy that took place following the earthly ministry of Christ's apostles. That apostasy made necessary the Restoration of the gospel. Through visions, the ministering of angels, and revelations to men on the earth, God restored the gospel. The Restoration started with the Prophet Joseph Smith and has continued to the present through the work of the Lord's living prophets.

That's pretty exclusive. It wipes out over 1,700 or so years of Christian history and teaching. So based on that exclusive claim, we can see some general categories. Much like we mentioned earlier with other groups, some Mormons believe differently than others. Traditional Mormons believe what the LDS has always taught, while more progressive Mormons follow some of the more diverse voices within Mormonism. Regardless, the majority of Mormons, including many Mormon missionaries and church leaders, are not well-versed in the specifics of Mormon theology. This is often true of the different

groups we're talking about tonight—and sadly, it's true of many followers of Christ. I hope that will be less the case after tonight.

But the important thing is this: I would not assume, just because you're talking with a Mormon, that they know all the things we're about to look at—or even the things we've already discussed about who Mormons are and what they believe. I want to go straight to the source now to describe what they believe. We'll have quotes from Joseph Smith and other Mormon presidents since his death. We'll have quotes from their official church website.

As a side note, the LDS website isn't just one person's interpretation of Mormonism. By comparison, if you went to christianity.org, you wouldn't find everything every Christian teaches or believes. In other words, there's not one Christian church that speaks authoritatively on behalf of all Christians. But other than some minor differences as we mentioned, there is a sense in which Mormonism has a central authoritative church. We'll see something similar with Jehovah's Witnesses and with the Catholic church. These groups have an official source that speaks on behalf of every member in a way that's different from what many of us are used to.

So for example, there's not one authoritative Christian church that speaks on behalf of the church I pastor. All this to say, don't think when I use LDS.org that I just found a random website run by some 15-year-old in his spare time who likes to say what Mormons believe, and he just so happened to be the first to get the domain name and he gets his kicks off of that. LDS.org is communicating primary doctrines on behalf of Mormon leaders and the Mormon church as a whole.

All this is important because my aim is not just to say what I think Mormons believe—or with any of these groups tonight. I really want to clearly, fairly and accurately represent what they teach. Tonight would not be helpful at all for anyone if I was misrepresenting what these groups believe. I obviously don't have time drill deep and cover every single detail and doctrine. My hope is to accurately represent the big picture of what they believe.

So with that, **what does Mormonism teach about God?** All these things are critical to understanding Mormonism and why we're calling it a cult. Mormonism teaches that God the Father was once a man and has now progressed to godhood. In the words of Lorenzo Snow, the fifth Mormon president, "As man now is, God once was; as God now is, man may become." God the Father was once a man and has now progressed to godhood, and so can you.

Mormonism also teaches that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are three distinct gods. Mormonism teaches that God the Father is the physical father of all spirit-children, which includes all people, as well as Jesus and the Holy Spirit. This is straight from official LDS teaching:

There are three separate persons in the Godhead: God, the Eternal Father; His Son, Jesus Christ; and the Holy Ghost. We believe in each of Them (A of F 1:1). From latter-day revelation we learn that the Father and the Son have tangible bodies of flesh and bone and that the Holy Ghost is a personage of spirit, without flesh and

bone (D&C 130:22–23). These three persons are one in perfect unity and harmony of purpose and doctrine (John 17:21–23; 2 Ne. 31:21; 3 Ne. 11:27, 36).

We'll talk in a minute about these different writings that are referenced in parentheses. "A of F" refers to "Articles of the Faith." "D&C" refers to The Doctrine and the Covenants. And then when you see books that are not in the Bible, that's from the Book of Mormon.

Mormonism teaches that God the Father was once a man and has now progressed to godhood. God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit are distinct gods, and thousands of other gods exist. In addition, seeds of divinity exist in all of us:

Latter-day Saints see all people as children of God in a full and complete sense; they consider every person divine in origin, nature and potential. Each has an eternal core and is 'a beloved spirit son or daughter of heavenly parents.' Each possesses seeds of divinity and must choose whether to live in harmony or tension with that divinity. Through the Atonement of Jesus Christ, all people may 'progress toward perfection and ultimately realize their divine destiny.' Just as a child can develop the attributes of his or her parents over time, the divine nature that humans inherit can be developed to become like their Heavenly Father's.

This picture of God is for those beyond even us. Mormonism teaches that prior to creation, many inhabited worlds and planets existed, each of which had gods. In the words of Brigham Young, the first Mormon president and after whom Brigham Young University (BYU) is named:

There never was a time when there were not Gods and worlds, and men were not passing through the same ordeals that we are now passing through. That course has been from all eternity, and it is and will be to all eternity.

So how did our world come to be? Mormonism teaches that a council of gods created our world out of eternal physical matter. In the words of Joseph Smith, "God never made something out of nothing"—which would be the Christian doctrine of creation based on Genesis. So as you can see, from the very beginning, when it comes to teaching about God or the one true God, Mormonism is deviating significantly, to say the least.

Then what does Mormonism teach about Scripture and authority? Contrary to the Bible as the only authoritative work, you have four authoritative works—four works that speak with authority for Mormonism. One, you have the Book of Mormon, which is called another Testament of Jesus Christ. It contains the record of God's dealing with the inhabitants of ancient America from 2000 B.C. to 400 A.D.

Remember Joseph Smith's vision of the angel Moroni when he was told about golden plates written in hieroglyphics. Smith used reading crystals to decipher it. He learned about Israelites who had migrated to America in the 6th century B.C., who were then killed in battle in A.D. 428. So the Book of Mormon tells their story. As a side note, the Book of Mormon has many similarities to the King James Version of the Bible, both in content and in form.

Then you have the Doctrine and Covenants, which is a collection of revelations and inspired declarations for the establishment and regulation of the Church of Jesus Christ in the last days. These revelations came to Joseph Smith and a few others whom they call “Latter-Day prophets.” As the name signifies, they explain different doctrines that Mormons believe. Then you have The Pearl of Great Price, which is specifically a selection of revelations, translations and writings of Joseph Smith.

In addition to those three sources of authority, you have the King James Version of the Bible, which Mormonism teaches is not inerrant, because there are errors in translation. Joseph Smith writes in The Pearl of Great Price, “We believe the Bible to be the word of God as far as it is translated correctly; we also believe the Book of Mormon to be the word of God” (Articles of Faith 1:8). See how both the Bible and the Book of Mormon are put on the same plane.

Not only is the Bible not inerrant, it is also not sufficient. We need another book. The Book of Mormon says, “Thou fool, that shall say: A Bible, we have got a Bible, and we need no more Bible.” (2 Nephi 29:6 ). In other words, it’s foolish to say you have the Bible, and that is sufficient. It’s also worth noting that the LDS version of the Bible is footnoted to interpret meaning in alignment with LDS teachings, particularly when it comes to some of the Scriptures we’ll look at below.

Those four sources of authority are not complete. So Mormonism teaches that there are ongoing revelations and new interpretations that can supersede previous revelation from God. In other words, future revelation can not only expand upon, but actually correct previous revelation. Any new revelations or interpretations can be brought forward only by the Mormon president. So this is basic Mormon teaching about God, about scripture and authority.

**What do they teach about people and sin?** Mormonism teaches that men and women today are spirit sons and daughters of God. Prior to creation, prior to our birth, our spirits were children of heavenly parents. So, yes, we were physically created, but the essential intelligence of our spirits is considered to be eternal. There came a point when, in a family council, God the Father told the spirit children that, according to His plan of salvation, we would have to leave our heavenly home, take on human bodies, and be tested, before we can progress to godhood.

So that’s what happened. We left our heavenly home, we took on new bodies, and now we’re being tested in order to progress to godhood. This is key, not just in terms of our makeup—how we got here—but in terms of who we are. Particularly pertaining to good and evil, Mormonism teaches that in our eternal nature we are basically good. We’re not sinners by nature in that sense. In our eternal nature we’re basically good, but in our earthly nature we are prone to error.

**What do they teach about Jesus?** Jesus lived a sinless life so that we, His spirit brothers and sisters, could become gods like Him and God the Father. That leads to what Mormonism teaches about Jesus. Follow this closely, because the paragraph from LDS.org below sounds a lot like what Christian followers of Christ believe—except for the references in parentheses, of course. Follow this:

[Jesus] was born to Mary at Bethlehem, lived a sinless life, and made a perfect atonement for the sins of all mankind by the shedding of His blood and giving His life on the cross (Matt. 2:1; 1 Ne. 11:13–33; 3 Ne. 27:13–16; D&C 76:40–42). He rose from the dead, thus assuring the eventual resurrection of all mankind. Through Jesus' Atonement and Resurrection, those who repent of their sins and obey God's commandments can live eternally with Jesus and the Father (2 Ne. 9:10–12; 21–22; D&C 76:50–53, 62) [LDS.org].

There's a lot—not necessarily all—but there's a lot that sounds familiar there. You can see why many Christians might read that and think, “Oh, yeah, that sounds Christian to me.” They can even hear that and think, “Yeah...I mean, I think so.” But when you start to dig a little deeper about what that paragraph is saying, and things get strangely unfamiliar, because Mormonism teaches that Jesus is the firstborn spirit child of the heavenly Father and the heavenly mother. Which means Jesus is a secondary god under God the Father. Remember, there are many gods. God the Father is one and Jesus is under Him. So Jesus did not possess deity in himself; instead, Jesus progressed to deity in the spirit world. Which leads to how he saves us.

What Mormonism teaches **about salvation** is that Jesus died on a cross, rose from the dead, but the key is His death was not to endure the wrath due our sin. It's not that Jesus was paying the price for our sin debt, in our place, as our Substitute. Instead, Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead to enable us to return to our original state as spiritual children of God. That's what the cross is about: our spirit brother making it possible for us to return to our original spiritual state.

How can that happen? According to Mormonism, the conditions for salvation are grace and effort. The “and” there is really important. In the words of this teaching manual for the Book of Mormon: “Grace cannot suffice without total effort on the part of the recipient. Hence the explanation, ‘It is by grace that we are saved, after all we can do’ (2 Ne. 25:23). (Book of Mormon Student Manual).” That's a little different than Ephesians 2:8, isn't it? “After all we can do.” So if we're going to be saved, there must be grace and effort. We must have faith, repentance, baptism—including baptism for the dead. So one can be baptized on behalf of the dead.

Because all on the earth do not have the opportunity to accept the gospel during mortality, the Lord has authorized baptisms performed by proxy for the dead. Therefore, those who accept the gospel in the spirit world may qualify for entrance into God's kingdom [Baptism, Baptize].

So somebody on earth can be baptized for you in the spirit world. Salvation is possible through moral endurance—specifically not consuming tobacco, alcohol, illegal narcotics, coffee or tea. I'm not going to ask anybody tonight what they are drinking to stay awake. But these specifics are found in one of the revelations given to Joseph Smith. It's called The Word of Wisdom.

On top of all these things, you have various ordinances: baptism, which we've already mentioned, confirmation, ordination, the priesthood—which is reserved for men—the temple endowment and the marriage sealing. Straight from the LDS website, I quote:

In the church, an ordinance is a sacred formal act performed by the authority of the priesthood. Some ordinances are essential to our exaltation. These ordinances are called “saving ordinances.” They include: baptism, confirmation, ordination to the Melchizedek priesthood for men, the temple endowment and the marriage sealing. With each of these ordinances, we enter into solemn covenants with the Lord.

This leads to the last section on **judgment and eternity according to Mormonism**. Everyone receives salvation, which means to them a resurrected, immortal life in a heavenly kingdom. Once the body is united with the spirit, three potential destinations await.

One is celestial glory. There are two levels of celestial glory. The highest level is reserved for married Mormons who have kept the celestial laws and commandments and who have participated in Mormon rituals. Remember, the marriage sealing is one of the ordinances essential to our exaltation. So only married Mormons can achieve the highest level of celestial glory. Then the lower level is for single Mormons who have lived worthy lives, as well as good people—including Christians—who did not have a chance on earth to hear about and accept Mormonism.

That is totally messed up now for thousands of people tonight. One significant note to mention here is that these people cannot become gods. So god is reserved for those in the higher level of celestial glory. Just to make sure you're getting this: now that you know about Mormonism, you could not be included in this group.

Terrestrial glory is the next potential destination, reserved for unworthy Mormons and good people who knew about Mormonism on earth but rejected it until after death. Which then leaves telestial glory for wicked people who reject Mormonism even after death. Telestial glory is actually pretty similar to the Christian understanding of hell, but one significant difference is that it is not eternal. It doesn't last forever.

I fully realize we just flew through some massive beliefs and doctrines. We could drill down on each for a while, but our purpose is to hit the basics of what Mormons believe and teach. Hopefully this gives you a good overview, and hopefully this makes it crystal clear that Mormons are not Christians. Remember our definition of a cult and just think: does Mormonism apply?

A cult is a group that claims to be in harmony with Christianity but denies foundational Christian doctrines. Generally these groups follow the instruction of one individual who dictates false teachings. Remember our definition of a counterfeit gospel: a fraudulent imitation of the gospel that deceives. So is Mormonism a cult and a counterfeit gospel? Without question. When it comes to denying foundational Christian doctrines, Mormons deny foundational biblical historical beliefs about every truth thread in the



gospel: God, man, Jesus, faith, eternity. It all comes back to Joseph Smith, as well as prophets and presidents of the Mormon church who've come after him.

In the end, Mormonism is no gospel at all. It's not good news. Mormonism offers a low view of God among innumerable other gods, a warped view of man, another Jesus altogether different from what the Bible teaches about Jesus and what Jesus teaches about Himself, a works-based faith that lays all sorts of requirements upon someone for salvation and ultimately, a false hope for one's eternal future.

## **How Do We Share the Gospel With Mormons?**

Which is why if there are indeed 16 million members and 30,000 congregations worldwide—nine million of them in the United States, including I'm guessing many friends, coworkers, neighbors, maybe even family members of ours tonight—then we need to know how to share the good news with them. If they're coming to our doors, we need to know, not just how to refute false teaching they are spreading, but also how to share the truth of the gospel with them. Some of these things apply to sharing the gospel with all people, but I've tried to make specific application to sharing the gospel with Mormons.

First, I would encourage you to **demonstrate the love of Christ**. Think of Colossians 4:2-6:

*Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving. At the same time, pray also for us, that God may open to us a door for the word, to declare the mystery of Christ, on account of which I am in prison—that I may make it clear, which is how I ought to speak. Walk in wisdom toward outsiders, making the best use of the time. Let your speech always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how you ought to answer each person.*

Our goal in any conversation with someone who's Mormon is not to win an argument with contempt. Our goal is to care for a friend with compassion. Matthew 9:35-38 tells us that when Jesus saw the crowds, He had compassion on them.

*And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."*

When you see a Mormon at your door, which emotion should mark you—contempt or compassion?

Sure, for all the reasons we discussed it's right to hate false teachings and the destruction they bring, but when it comes to those who have been taught those things and are now passing them on, let's start with compassion. Demonstrate the love of Christ and **imitate the life of Christ**. I would say there is a high value in the Mormon—and in the Mormons I know—on decency, morality, family, kindness.

These things should be all the more true in those who have the life of Christ and the Holy Spirit of God dwelling in us. There is a sense in which we are what Ephesians 5:1-2 calls us: imitators of God.

*Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children. And walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.*

It's not that we possess divinity, but we do reflect His character. When people see me with my five-year-old son and say, "He's your spitting image," or "He's your mini-me, a little David," so should we reflect God and imitate the life of Christ individually and in your family.

Mormons place a high value on marriage, so it's a helpful gospel witness to show a marriage picture that illustrates the gospel. Husbands should be lovingly laying down their lives for their wives. Wives should be joyfully submitting to their husband's loving leadership, according Ephesians 5. Parenting should be done according to Ephesians 6. We are to imitate the life of Christ in our families and in the church.

*Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body. "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband (Ephesians 5:22–33).*

*Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother" (this is the first commandment with a promise), "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land." Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord (Ephesians 6:1–4).*

Mormons place a high value on community in the church, which is the fruit of the gospel. Jesus said in John 13:35 states, "*By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.*"

So we should imitate the life of Christ and the love of Christ. Obviously, none of us are able to do this perfectly, but we should strive by God's grace toward this end. And as we're doing this, we need to **explain the gospel of Christ** with gentleness and respect.

*...but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect... (1 Peter 3:15).*

We realize that some Mormon teachings may seem outlandish and crazy to you, and you might wonder why anyone would follow Joseph Smith. But apparently 16 million people see a reason to do so.

We must explain the gospel of Christ respectfully and with sensitivity, but also with clarity. In our conversations with Mormons, we must be clear about Who God is and who we are. As we've already seen, there's only one God, and there is no one else like Him. He is the just and gracious Creator of the universe. He is holy and perfect; He does not change:

*I am the Lord, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me, that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the Lord, and there is no other (Isaiah 45:5–6).*

*For I the Lord do not change; therefore you, O children of Jacob, are not consumed... (Malachi 3:6).*

*Of old you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you will remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will change them like a robe, and they will pass away, but you are the same, and your years have no end (Psalm 102:25–27).*

Jesus also makes it clear in John 4:24 that God is Spirit: “*God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth*” (John 4:24).

He is eternal. “*From everlasting to everlasting,*” He is God (Psalm 90:2).

*Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God (Psalm 90:2).*

We also must be clear about who we are, how we are creatures who are totally dependent upon God. We are created beings—heart, mind, soul and body.

I know all the birds of the hills, and all that moves in the field is mine. “If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and its fullness are mine.” (Psalm 50:11–12)

We are not morally neutral. We all have a sense of right and wrong and we have all done wrong. We have all turned aside from God's ways to our ways. It looks different in our lives, but it's evident in all of our lives. We're not morally neutral and as a result we are all ultimately guilty. This bad news about who we are is essential to understanding the good news of Who Jesus is. Any cult, or anybody, who attempts to minimize the bad news will ultimately minimize the good news at the same time.

*And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work*

*in the sons of disobedience—among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind (Ephesians 2:1–3).*

*Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned... (Romans 5:12).*

We must be clear that we are guilty before God, which then leads us to **be clear about Who Jesus is and what Jesus has done**. This is what makes the good news so good. *“For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5).* Jesus is utterly unique in all of human history. He’s fully God and fully Man, eternal in nature and equal with God. We’ve seen how the Bible makes that plain. Jesus, God in the flesh, died on the cross to pay the price for our sins. Romans 3:25 says, *“God put [Jesus] forward as a propitiation by his blood.”* That means God poured out the just wrath and judgment due you and me in our sin upon His Son in our place. Jesus is our Substitute, uniquely able to pay the price for our sin.

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made (John 1:1–3).*

*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14).*

*I and the Father are one (John 10:30).*

*...for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God’s righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus (Romans 3:23–26).*

So respectfully, clearly and graciously, we need to explain Who Jesus is, because the content of the good news is full of grace. *“For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God...” (Ephesians 2:8).* Remember in the Book of Mormon it says, “By grace we are saved after all we can do.” That’s not good news. That’s horrible news. What can you do? Hopefully you can do enough—and we’ll see what happens? No, that’s the opposite of what we see in Scripture. We are saved by God’s grace and not by our works. It’s been that way since the beginning. Romans 4:3 says, *“Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.”* We’re all saved through faith, not through our effort. We live by faith.

*What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? “Abraham believed God, and it*

*was counted to him as righteousness.” Now to the one who works, his wages are not counted as a gift but as his due. And to the one who does not work but believes in him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is counted as righteousness, just as David also speaks of the blessing of the one to whom God counts righteousness apart from works: “Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man against whom the Lord will not count his sin” (Romans 4:1–8).*

*For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith, as it is written, “The righteous shall live by faith” (Romans 1:16–17).*

Right after Secret Church last year, Heather and I and our two older boys got on a plane to Germany, where I was scheduled to preach in a couple places in commemoration of the Reformation. Justification by faith was such a strong component of the Reformation. As I was reflecting on this in preparation for tonight, I realized again how precious this truth is. As we were walking around Wittenberg, thinking about how Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses on the church door there, my kids had a creative idea. So we took a copy of Radical and acted like we were nailing it on the church door at Wittenberg. It didn’t have quite the same effect. It wasn’t history altering, but it was a good try.

This is what our forefathers in the faith died for. We’ll talk more about that. But this is the glorious gospel truth: *“If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved”* (Romans 10:9).

Share that good news graciously and humbly.

*Thus says the Lord: “Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is the place of my rest? All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the Lord. But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word” (Isaiah 66:1–2).*

God looks for the person *“who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at My word”* He doesn’t look for people who presume they can be god. That’s the essence of sin and Mormonism feeds it. “You can become just like God. You can be God.” Our goal is not equality with God. There’s nobody like God. *“There is none like you, O Lord; you are great, and your name is great in might”* (Jeremiah 10:6). Our goal is not equality with God—our goal is reconciliation with God, a restored relationship with God. That’s what we want and what we all need. It’s why Jeremiah 9:23-24 says:

*Thus says the Lord: “Let not the wise man boast in his wisdom, let not the mighty man boast in his might, let not the rich man boast in his riches, but let him who boasts boast in this, that he understands and knows me, that I am the Lord who practices steadfast love, justice, and*

*righteousness in the earth. For in these things I delight, declares the Lord” (Jeremiah 9:23–24).*

That’s what we’re after. We want to know God, and we want others to know God.

We proclaim the gospel humbly and we proclaim the gospel urgently. I don’t think it was a coincidence a couple weeks ago when I was taking an Uber ride. I started trying to have a gospel conversation and discovered that the man I was talking to was a leader in the Mormon church who specializes in mobilizing missionaries. He was talking about how many missionaries they have—70,000 missionaries. It was a very interesting conversation. He was telling me how great it is to have all these people going around the world.

My thought was, “Why in the world are we not raising up our kids to spread the one true gospel about the one true God around the world? Why in the world are 70,000 Mormon children raised with the expectation of missionary service for a couple years to make this false gospel known somewhere in the world? Why has it not occurred to us that that would be a good thing to do? As we’re raising our kids, why are the only things we’re telling them is to make good grades to get into some school, so they can get a good job?”

We’ve missed what matters. We have the greatest news in the world. Let’s raise up kids with the expectation, at least at some point—before they go to college, during college, right after college—but at some point in this unique time in their live that they will give their life to make this good news known somewhere else. We have this news—let’s spread it with urgency. We know everyone will be resurrected, but not all of them to salvation.

*Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit”—yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes (James 4:13-14).*

Jesus Himself said this:

*Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in himself, so he has granted the Son also to have life in himself. And he has given him authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment (John 5:25–29).*

That judgment is coming for all people—for every one of us tonight and for every person in the world, including 16 million Mormons. Contrary to what Mormonism teaches, there are no second chances after death. *“It is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment”* (Hebrews

9:27). The Bible nowhere speaks of second chances after death. When you breathe your last breath, your eternity is sealed. This is why we explain the gospel urgently, and as we do, we believe in the power of Christ to draw people to salvation.

You might be thinking, “How am I going to persuade a Mormon friend or family member to believe the gospel?” The answer to that question is that you don’t ultimately have the power to do that. You have the God-given ability to demonstrate God’s love, imitate God’s life, explain the gospel in all the ways we just mentioned, and as you do, you must trust His Word completely.

*And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved (Acts 4:12).*

Trust the power of God’s Word, knowing that it is indeed inspired and inerrant. God’s Word is indeed supreme and sufficient, and we don’t need any other word to save us. The Word is supreme revelation. We don’t need any private visions. The Word is sufficient for our salvation and it’s sufficient for others’ salvation.

*And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God (1 Corinthians 2:1–5).*

*All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness.... (2 Timothy 3:16).*

*Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3).*

*I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book (Revelation 22:18–19).*

So we trust His Word completely and we pray to Him continually, asking God to do what ultimately only He can do. He can open eyes. He can draw people—including Mormon friends, neighbors, family members, coworkers and people you meet on your doorstep—to the good news of the gospel.

*Brothers, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for them is that they may be saved (Romans 10:1).*

So let's pray continually for Mormons. I think it would be inappropriate if we didn't stop right now and pray for Mormon friends and neighbors, coworkers and family members. Will you pray with me?

God, we praise You for the gospel, and we pray right now for Mormon friends, neighbors, coworkers and family members. There are faces and names in our minds and there are people we don't know. We pray that You would, by Your grace, open their eyes to see Your supremacy over us—Jesus, Your supremacy over us—and the salvation by grace alone through faith alone in You that is available to us.

God, we pray that You would give us grace, wisdom, humility, love and clarity in sharing the gospel; boldness in sharing the gospel with Mormons around us. We plead that the fruit of our time together tonight would be that many of these people—whom You loved so much that You sent Your Son to die for them—we pray that the fruit of this night would be many of them coming to know You. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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