

A KEY TO MORMON OUTREACH IS DISTINGUISHING  
BETWEEN MORMON TERMINOLOGY AND BIBLICAL  
TERMINOLOGY REGARDING THE PLAN OF SALVATION

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## **Abstract**

Talking to your Mormon friends can be confusing as they use the same language that the Bible uses. Since they use the same language that the Bible does, it makes evangelizing them difficult as it seems like both the Christian and the Mormon are saying the same thing. This paper looks at the word meanings within the plan of salvation, and shows the need to differentiate between what Mormons mean and what the Bible means. When Christians understand these distinctions, then they can do effective outreach to their Mormon friends.

Nothing is more frustrating than trying to communicate with someone when there is a language barrier. Trying to convey what you are intending to say can be difficult, especially when you are not sure if the person fully understands what you are trying to say. What can be even more frustrating is when two people in a conversation speak the same language and yet they talk past each other.

This can easily happen to Christians when talking to their Mormon friends. There have been several books written about the Mormon religion explaining how Mormonism really is not a Christian religion. Several books will explain how the Mormon religion teaches that it is by works they are saved, and that they believe that they can become perfect on this earth. Maybe you have attended a Bible class where Mormonism has been brought up, or maybe your pastor has talked about Mormonism in his sermon. As Bible-believing Christians, we understand the need to share with everyone the message of Jesus' perfect life and innocent death. We know and believe that it is only through faith in what Jesus has done that anyone can enter into eternal life.

Would it surprise you to hear that Mormons would absolutely agree to that statement? They believe that Jesus came to earth and that he was the only person to ever live a perfect life. Mormons believe that Jesus also suffered and died on the cross to pay for the effects of sins. In fact here is a quote that describes who Mormons are: "Mormons are diverse, unique people who share a common belief in Jesus Christ as our personal Savior and Redeemer."<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps this quote does not surprise you. Maybe you have already had the experience of talking past your Mormon friend. Maybe you have already explained the truth about Jesus' perfect life and innocent death for you, a truth that is so near and dear to your heart, and were completely shocked to hear your Mormon friend be in complete agreement with you.

So how can we share the message of Jesus' perfect life and innocent death with our Mormon friends if they agree with what we are telling them? How can they say that they are saved through Jesus' perfect life and innocent death? Are they just telling you what you want to hear so that you will drop the conversation, or are they, in fact, Christians? I have actually had family members and friends ask me about this exact topic. They could not understand how Mormons could claim that they were saved by grace. It did not make sense to them when they knew Mormons believed good works get them to heaven. It caused me to dig deeper into the

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<sup>1</sup> "MORMONS Are Diverse, Unique People Who Share a Common Belief in Jesus Christ as Our Personal Savior and Redeemer." MORMON 101. <http://beta.mormon.org/mormon101/overview>.

Mormon language, and essentially do an in-depth study of Mormon doctrine to finally figure out the problem.

Through all my research and reading, I have come to the conclusion that the problem is a case of talking past each other. When you and your Mormon friend talk about what you believe, you are essentially talking two different languages even though both of you are using the same words. That is how Mormons are able to say that they are saved by God's grace, that they need to repent of their sins, and that Jesus is their Savior. The words that they use contain different meanings than what the Bible gives.

If we want to effectively witness to our Mormon friends we need to talk to them about the most important topic: salvation. There is nothing more important than spreading the message of how heaven is freely ours, and is not dependent on our works. Eventually this world will end when Jesus returns, and it will be a sad day when Mormons find out they believe in a Jesus that does not exist. Spreading the message of salvation to them is of the utmost importance. In order to do that, however, we need to know their language. We have to learn their definition to the words they are using within the plan of salvation; otherwise we will talk past each other. For instance, we will both agree that Jesus is the only way to heaven, but what Mormons mean by that statement and what Christians mean is very different. The conversation will end with us being frustrated, and they will still not believe in the real Jesus. So the first thing we need to do is learn their language.

The second thing that we need to do is to know what the biblical definition of words mean. This may seem like an obvious point, but it so important. We need to know more than just the basics of each word; we need to dig deeper into their significance. Part of the problem comes from the fact that we want to give ourselves taglines to remember what words mean. For instance: grace means God's undeserved love for us. That is absolutely correct, but a Mormon would also agree with that statement. So how can we have a deeper understanding of words like grace? That is another thing this paper will look at.

Part of the problem is that we are living in a culture that is getting further and further away from knowing biblical words. We no longer live in a society where someone could say words like "justification," "righteousness," and "sanctification" and be understood. That is because most people do not know what those words mean. Yet you hear those words if you step into one of our congregations. We need to stop being content with knowing only a general idea

of what each biblical term means, especially terms concerning salvation. Like I said before, there are plenty of books out there to tell us what Mormons believe, and we may even be able to figure out their language within that book. However, I have yet to come across a resource that puts side by side the Mormon definitions of words with biblical definitions of words; especially of words within the plan of salvation. That is the message that is most important.

We can read books about what Mormons teach and believe. We can read books about what their terminology of their words mean, but if we do not know what biblical definitions are we will not be able to have meaningful conversations with them. I pray that this paper will help all Christians who are looking to spread the message of Jesus to their Mormon neighbors. That is the objective of this paper. I am seeking to provide a guide that will aid Christians in having meaningful conversations with their Mormon neighbors. The hope is that this paper will do more than just allow Christians to engage in a conversation with their Mormon friends, but actually be able to spread the message of Jesus to them.

In this paper, I will give a brief overview of salvation before getting into specific words within the plan of salvation. Essentially each “word” will contain three parts to it. First I will give the Mormon teaching on the word, and how they use it within the plan of salvation. Then, I will lay out how the Bible defines and uses each word, and how it relates to the plan of salvation. Finally, each “word” will close out with a brief section explaining the significance of clarifying the word, and as to how you can communicate this word or phrase to your Mormon friend in a loving way. This paper will help people to have a meaningful<sup>2</sup> conversation with their Mormon friend by explaining both Mormon terminology and biblical terminology within the plan of salvation.

### **Plan of Salvation**

Before looking at the meanings of individual words of salvation, it will be helpful to have an overview of the plan of salvation. Being able to refer back to this overall concept of salvation will help as we go forward and look at the individual words.

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<sup>2</sup> “Meaningful conversation” in this paper is defined not as just a good conversation, but a conversation that leads Mormons to the truth about Jesus and what he has done for them.

### **Latter-Day Saints<sup>3</sup>**

“The plan of salvation is God’s plan for the happiness of His children. It is centered on the Atonement of Jesus Christ.”<sup>4</sup> This sounds like a good explanation to what the plan of salvation is, right? Unfortunately, what Mormons believe to be the plan of salvation is far different than what the biblical definition is of the plan of salvation.

The LDS teaching of the plan of salvation is exactly that. It is a plan that Heavenly Father<sup>5</sup> has given for people to follow to achieve salvation. The focus is on mankind, not God, as man achieves his own salvation. If you were to say this to a Mormon though, they would deny it. They would say that they absolutely thank God and give him credit because he gave them the plan of salvation. They thank Heavenly Father because he was kind enough to give mankind the plan so that they could work out their salvation. “Great beyond comprehension is the love of God. He is our loving Eternal Father. Out of His love for us, He has given an eternal plan which, when followed, leads to exaltation in His kingdom.”<sup>6</sup> The Mormons love God and praise him for giving mankind such a plan to follow.

That leads to the question: What is the plan? “The plan of salvation, for men in this life, is the gospel of Jesus Christ. It comprises all of the laws, ordinances, and performances by conformity to which mortal man is empowered to gain eternal life in the kingdom of God.”<sup>7</sup> According to Mormon doctrine as long as you follow the steps of the plan you will be empowered to gain eternal life. You will have the ability within yourself to be a champion and earn heaven.

The steps in the plan of salvation are as follows: 1) Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; 2) repentance; 3) baptism by immersion under the hands of a legal administrator; 4) the laying on of hands for the gift of the Holy Ghost, also under the hands of a legal administrator; and 5) enduring in righteousness to the end of the mortal probation.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The official name to the Mormon Church is the Church of Jesus Christ of the Latter Day Saints. Since that is the official term, the headings will all be the abbreviated version of the official name. Referring to your friend as a Mormon is not offensive to them. Many Mormons refer to themselves as Mormons as Pastor Cares points out in *Speaking the Truth in Love to Mormons*, 269.

<sup>4</sup> *The Plan of Salvation*, (USA: Intellectual Reserve, Inc), 2.

<sup>5</sup> Mormons leave out “the” when referring to God as Father.

<sup>6</sup> Mark Cares, *Speaking the Truth in Love to Mormons* (Milwaukee: Northwest Publishing House, 1993), 26.

<sup>7</sup> Bruce McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*: (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 576.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, 576.

At first glance, this might seem to be an okay plan especially as we live in a culture where we like to have steps laid out to follow. “Follow these 10 steps to have a happy life,” or “Follow these 5 steps to have a happy marriage,” are types of articles trending right now. We like the idea of steps being laid out for us in order to achieve something, and that is exactly what the Mormon religion does. It lays out a plan of steps for someone to follow to gain heaven. It is completely centered around your work as an individual.

Mormons believe that if you follow these steps well enough, and you make enough good choices in your life, you can actually become perfect. This type of thinking is found throughout Mormon teaching. Here is just one example of that train of thought, “Yet, would the Lord give us a commandment that was impossible for us to keep? And when he gives a commandment doesn’t he, as (Prophet) Nephi said, prepare a way for us to accomplish what he commands.”<sup>9</sup> Joseph Smith in his book, “The Way to Perfection,” says, “We have been informed that his meaning is that we, in this life, should try to perform every duty and keep every law and thus endeavor to be perfect in our sphere as the Father is in his.”<sup>10</sup> Mormons strive and strive to be perfect, and truly believe that is possible to achieve perfection here on earth.

Not only do these steps lay out for someone how to be perfect and achieve eternal life, they also show how to achieve the ultimate goal: become a god. “God himself, finding he was in the midst of spirits and glory, because he was more intelligent, saw proper to institute laws whereby the rest could have a privilege to advance like himself.”<sup>11</sup> Essentially God came up with this plan of salvation so that others could progress by following these steps not only to gain salvation, but to actually become like him. It is an attractive teaching because that is what every human nature wants. The sinful nature wants to become God, and place itself above the true God. The goal of this plan is made even clearer in this quote,

“Man can transform himself and he must. Man has in himself the seeds of godhood, which can germinate and grow and develop. As the acorn becomes the oak, the mortal man becomes a god. It is within his power to lift himself by his very bootstraps from the plane on which he finds himself to the plane on which he should be. It may be a long, hard lift with many obstacles, but it is a real possibility.” (Spencer W. Kimball, quoted in *Doctrines of the Gospel Student Manual*, p. 52)<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Speaking the Truth in Love to Mormons, 22.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 23.

<sup>11</sup> Mormon Doctrine, 575.

<sup>12</sup> Speaking the Truth in Love to Mormons, 30.

Not only is this an official doctrine of the Mormon Church, but it is taught to people as they enter the Mormon Church. *Gospel Principles* is a book that is used for personal devotion, but it is also used when teaching new members of the Mormon faith. In this book it says in regard to the plan of salvation, “We learned that if we followed His plan, we would become like Him. We would be resurrected; we would have all power in heaven and on earth; we would become heavenly parents and have spirit children just as He does.”<sup>13</sup>

The plan of salvation for a Mormon is really simple: follow the steps and you will achieve heaven and become a god just like Heavenly Father is. It is as simple as that.

## **Bible**

The LDS teaching of salvation stands in stark contrast with the biblical teaching of salvation. Instead of the glorification of man, the Bible glorifies God in all things, especially within the plan of salvation. As sinful human beings, there is no way that anyone could work out their own salvation because in order to enter into heaven God demands perfection. Heaven is God’s home and he has every right to determine what it takes to enter into his home. This makes sense. If someone were to go over to their friend’s house and their friend said that they wanted them to take their shoes off before entering their house, they certainly would. No one would have a problem with that. In the same way God has a condition for us to enter into heaven and it is by perfection as Matthew 5:48<sup>14</sup> says, “Be perfect, therefore, as your Heavenly Father is perfect.”<sup>15</sup> Jesus does not say to gradually become perfect, but rather be perfect. Likewise John Schaller says, “The Scriptures teach consistently, from first to last, that, because sinful man is utterly unable to achieve eternal salvation for himself, God in his mercy appointed his own Son, the God-Man Jesus Christ, as the only mediator of salvation.”<sup>16</sup>

There is no way we could ever be perfect. In order to be perfect, we have to get rid of all the sin that we ever committed and the sin we will commit in the future. Simply put: we cannot follow a 5-step plan to wash our sins away. We cannot follow a 5-step plan close enough to finally become perfect because a 5-step plan does not get rid of sin. Rather God worked out our salvation for us. God’s plan of salvation was simply this: to send his Son, Jesus, into the world

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<sup>13</sup> *Gospel principles* (Salt Lake City: Intellectual Reserve, Inc, 1978), 11.

<sup>14</sup> Mormons attempt to say that this verse proves that we can become perfect because Jesus would not command us to be perfect unless if it were possible.

<sup>15</sup> All Bible quotations in this paper will come from the New International Bible, 1984 edition.

<sup>16</sup> John Schaller, *Biblical Christology* (Milwaukee: Northwest Publishing House, 1981), 45.



to save the world through his perfect life and innocent death. 1 Corinthians 5:21 says, “God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.” The word righteousness means we are blameless before God. Because of Jesus’ work, God sees us as perfect children right now. John Schaller says, “He came to carry out the divine counsel of salvation according to the will of his Father, and to achieve the desired result, he submitted to the law, to fulfill it for all men, and likewise undertook to die as a sacrifice for their guilt.”<sup>17</sup> We contributed absolutely nothing to the plan of salvation. We are only recipients of the outcome of the plan. Pastor Cares says, “Instead of giving us a plan of salvation that we have to carry out to save ourselves, God gave us salvation itself.”<sup>18</sup> “He saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his great mercy.”<sup>19</sup>

The way that we achieve this salvation cannot be through our works, nor could we ever be worthy enough to receive such a gift. Schaller says, “Being dead in sins and transgressions, he (a human) cannot work out his own salvation. The law, though given unto life, has no power to restore life, but serves only to accentuate the helpless condition of the sinner.”<sup>20</sup> Schaller is simply echoing the words of Paul in Romans 7:10, “I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death.” If it were left up to us to achieve our salvation we would fail because we cannot keep the law perfectly. If it were up to us, we would all end up in hell.

Rather, “It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.” (Ephesians 2:8-9). If salvation is a gift from God that means it is free. If we were to work for it, it would no longer be a gift but something that we have earned. Praise God that the plan of salvation is a gift and not something left up to us to earn. If it were, we would never know if we had ever done enough to work out our own salvation.

Did God know that Adam and Eve were going to fall into sin, and that he would need to send a Savior into the world to save them from sin, death, and the devil? Yes, he did. He knew all that would happen before he created the world itself, and we know that he knew us before the

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<sup>17</sup> Biblical Christology, 147.

<sup>18</sup> Speaking the Truth in Love to Mormons, 26.

<sup>19</sup> Titus 3:5.

<sup>20</sup> Biblical Christology, 23.

foundation of the world.<sup>21</sup> As to why he created the world and us even when he knew that Adam and Eve would sin and he would have to send Jesus to save us, we do not know. That answer belongs to the Lord and will forever be a secret to us in this life.<sup>22</sup> What we do know though is that God sent Jesus to destroy the devil's work, and whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

### **Necessity for Clarity**

It is so important to know what the different definitions of the plan of salvation are, and to be able to distinguish between them. Obviously no one could talk to their Mormon neighbor about the plan of salvation if they themselves do not know the plan. Your Mormon friends will sound like they are Christians as they talk about how Jesus is their Savior. How they are able to say that will be discussed in a little while. However, it is important to keep in mind that when your Mormon neighbor speaks of the plan of salvation, they are talking about a very literal plan that God has given them to work out their own salvation.

So how can one have a meaningful conversation with their Mormon friend when the subject of salvation comes up? The key is to give God full credit for working out the salvation for us. This can easily be done by talking about the completeness of Christ's work specifically in making us blameless before God. There is nothing left for us to do. Our salvation has been won. Pastor Cares says in his book, "In my estimation, the one section of Scripture that most effectively presents the gospel to Mormons is Hebrew 10:10-18. Verse 14 is the verse that especially hits home: 'Because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.'"<sup>23</sup> Your Mormon friend will probably be surprised to hear that Scripture teaches that believing in Christ's saving work makes you perfect before God. It is this message that Christians love and hold near and dear to their hearts. It is that message of Christ's saving act that we need to remind ourselves about daily, and it is that message that Mormons so desperately need to hear.

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<sup>21</sup> Ephesians 1:4.

<sup>22</sup> Deuteronomy 29:29.

<sup>23</sup> Speaking the Truth in Love to Mormons, 184.

## Heavenly Father

Heavenly Father is one of the key people within the plan of salvation both for Bible-believing Christians and Mormons. Yet there is a big distinction between the Heavenly Father of the Bible and Heavenly Father of the Mormon Church. These distinctions will be shown as we answer the questions, “Who is Heavenly Father, and what has he done?”

### **Latter-Day Saints**

“God is the Supreme and Absolute Being in whom we believe and whom we worship. He is “the Great Parent of the universe,” and He “looks upon the whole of the human family with a fatherly care and paternal regard.”<sup>24</sup> “God is not only our Ruler and Creator; He is also our Heavenly Father.”<sup>25</sup>

Heavenly Father is the ultimate being in whom the Mormons believe in and worship. When Mormons refer to God, this is the person they mean. Heavenly Father is the ultimate being. He created all things, and it is because of him that the world keeps turning. Nothing happens without him behind it.

Who is this ultimate Supreme Being though? Joseph Smith, the great Mormon prophet declared, “God himself was once as we are now and is an exalted man.”<sup>26</sup> This fits directly in line with the way the Mormons think about salvation. If it is possible for someone to work and figure out their own salvation, that ultimately must be how Heavenly Father got to be where he is. He simply worked out his own salvation and became God. “Remember that God our Heavenly Father was perhaps once a child and mortal like we are and rose step by step in the scale of progress, in the school of advancement: has moved forward and overcome until He has arrived at the point where he now is.”<sup>27</sup> The god that Mormons claim to be their Heavenly Father was simply a man like any other man who came before him, and no statement is as clear as Joseph Smith’s,

“I am going to tell you how God came to be God. We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all eternity. I will refute that idea, and take away the veil, so that you may see...it is the first principle of the gospel to know for certainty the character of God, and to know that we may converse with him as one man

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<sup>24</sup> Gospel Principles, 6.

<sup>25</sup> Gospel Principles, 9.

<sup>26</sup> Walter Martin, *The Maze of Mormonism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1962), 80.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid*, 81.

converses with another and that he was once a man like us; yea, that God himself, the Father of us all, dwelt on an earth, the same as Jesus Christ himself did; and I will show it from the Bible.”<sup>28</sup>

Notice that Smith says that God did not dwell on this earth, but rather “an” earth. Mormons believe that God created this earth where humans are living, but there are many other “earths” out there. “He made the moon, the stars, and the sun. He organized this world and gave it form, motion, and life. He filled the air and the water with living things. He covered the hills and plains with all kinds of animal life.”<sup>29</sup> But they believe God lived on some other planet at some point. There he worked his way to become a god. Once he progressed to become a god, he then created this world.

Not only do they believe that Heavenly Father lived on an earth before he progressed, but Mormon doctrine teaches that Heavenly Father has flesh and bones. “The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man’s.”<sup>30</sup> Heavenly Father is not a supreme spirit, but rather a man who has worked his way up to being a god. In fact, Mormonism believes that if you deny that God has a body, then you deny God. “We affirm that to deny the materiality of God’s person is to deny God; for a thing without parts has no whole, and an immaterial body cannot exist.”<sup>31</sup>

What implications are there if God has flesh and bones? Mormons do believe that God is omnipresent, meaning he can be present anywhere in the world. They believe Heavenly Father has access to the whole world, and that there is no place that he cannot enter. However, Mormons do not mean that God is in every place at one time. They believe that Heavenly Father is limited to one location and that is it. “It has been said, therefore, that God is everywhere present; but this does not mean that the actual person of any one member of the Godhead can be physically present in more than one place at one time... Plainly, however, His person cannot be in more than one place at any one time.”<sup>32</sup>

Mormons cannot wrap their mind around the fact that God is not limited to time and space. Rather they confine him to one place and one time. This belief comes from the fact that they believe God used to be just like any other man and has simply worked his way up to being a god. As they look around and notice that they are confined to one place and one space, they

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<sup>28</sup> Edgar Kaiser, *Mormons: A Christian Witness* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2010), 22.

<sup>29</sup> Gospel Principles, 5.

<sup>30</sup> Joseph Smith, *Doctrine and Covenants*, 130:22 pg. 265.

<sup>31</sup> James Talmage, *Articles of Faith* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 1924), 48.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, 43.

must conclude that Heavenly Father can only be in one place at one time. However, they do not realize that God the creator of everything including time and space. If is the creator of time and space, then he is not under time and space, but above them.

Heavenly Father not only has worked his way up to where he is now, but he has also fathered all people of all time here on earth. “All men and women are literally the sons and daughters of God. ‘Man, as a spirit, was begotten and born of heavenly parent, and reared to maturity in the eternal mansions of the Father, prior to coming upon the earth in a temporal body.’”<sup>33</sup> Another quote from a Mormon source says the same thing, “You are a literal child of God, spiritually begotten in the premortal life. As His child, you can be assured that you have divine, eternal potential and that He will help you in your sincere efforts to reach that potential.”<sup>34</sup>

When your Mormon friends refer to Heavenly Father, they mean they are Heavenly Father’s literal offspring in the sense that they come as a result of Heavenly Father and a heavenly mother having sexual intercourse. They were born in the mansions of Heavenly Father and were prepared before coming to earth. In the premortal state,<sup>35</sup> everyone was a big family with Heavenly Father even to the point of having different personalities. “We were not all alike in heaven. We know, for example, that we were sons and daughters of heavenly parents—males and females. We possessed different talents and abilities, and we were called to do different things on earth.”<sup>36</sup>

Not only do Mormons believe God has spiritually begotten all of them, but they also believe Heavenly Father has even begotten Jesus and Lucifer (Satan) as spiritual children. They believe that we are all spirit brothers and sisters with Jesus, angels, demons, and Lucifer.<sup>37</sup> This naturally leads to the question, “Who then is Jesus,” but that will be addressed later on. We can be sure about one thing: Mormons believe Heavenly Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost

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<sup>33</sup> Gospel Principles, 9.

<sup>34</sup> *True to the Faith* (Salt Lake City: Intellectual Reserve, 2004), 74.

<sup>35</sup> Premortal state is the time period Mormons refer to before you were born on earth. They believe that everyone has a spirit body that has been around for a long period of time as each of us have waited to come to this earth. When we get to earth that is when we get our physical bodies. The reason we cannot remember this time period is because, “A veil covers our memories of our premortal life, but our Father in Heaven knows who we are and what we did before we came here.” (Gospel Principles, 10).

<sup>36</sup> Gospel Principles, 10.

<sup>37</sup> *Speaking the Truth in Love to Mormons*, 30.

are 3 different people. This is clearly based on the fact that Mormons believe Jesus was born of God; that Jesus is the offspring of Heavenly Father and a heavenly mother.

Yet, most Mormons do not really give this much thought. Mormons primarily focus on the fact that because they are Heavenly Father's literal children, they contain his divinity in them. It is because of this belief they believe they have what it takes to become gods.<sup>38</sup>

It was Heavenly Father who came up with the idea of the plan of salvation. He thought of the plan because he "knew we could not progress beyond a certain point unless we left Him for a time."<sup>39</sup> Essentially, Heavenly Father knew that if he did not come up with a plan we would remain only spirit bodies. So he came up with the plan of salvation and sent us to earth to endure hardships and trouble in order that we may progress to becoming gods.

That is why your Mormon friends love and praise God. Not only do they believe that they are the offspring of their Heavenly Father and heavenly mother, but they also praise him because he showed humans how much he loved them by coming up with the plan of salvation for them. It is because Heavenly Father is such loving Father that they now are able to progress and have the opportunity to become gods just like him.

## **Bible**

In order to understand God the Father, the one that the Bible testifies about, one needs to first realize that God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit are not three individual identities completely detached from each other. Deuteronomy 6:4 says, "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one." Again in 1 Corinthians 8:4 Paul says, "So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: we know that an idol is nothing at all in the world and that there is no God but one." There is only one God, but there are different persons of God. That is demonstrated several times throughout Scripture. In John 14 Jesus tells his disciples that he will ask the Father, and he will send them the Counselor, the Holy Spirit. Here we see God the three persons of the Godhead: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Not only do we see all distinct individual persons here, but we also see this at Jesus' baptism. "As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid, 30.

<sup>39</sup> Gospel Principles, 10.

descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, ‘This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.’”

Even though Scripture speaks of three persons, it is also clear from Scripture that God is one. “The doctrine of the Trinity, that Father, Son, and Holy (Spirit), three distinct persons in the one divine essence and nature, are one God, is found in both the Old and New Testament.”<sup>40</sup> Another quotation along the same lines says, “There is only one God. Yet this God is three persons in one being. Each person is completely God, coequal and coeternal, sharing equally in the essence of Godhood.”<sup>41</sup> This three-in-one God is a doctrine of Scripture that no one can understand, or ever will be able to understand. This goes back to those “secret things” of God. So instead of getting caught up in the secret things which we will never be able to understand, we turn our attention to the Father.

The Bible does call God Father, and there are times when it refers to God as our Heavenly Father. However, the Bible does not refer to him as the Heavenly Father because he spiritually conceived us with a heavenly mother. He created us in our mother’s womb, but he did not conceive us as a result of sexual intercourse with a heavenly mother. Rather, the Bible refers to him as our Father because of the role that he plays in our life. God is our Father in the sense that he created us, he provides for us, and he protects us just like our earthly fathers do.

If God the Father does not reproduce any children, nor is he the physical Father of anyone, how does Hebrews 1:5 fit in? In this section, the author to the Hebrews is proving that Jesus is superior to angels, and the author says, “For to which of the angels did God ever say, ‘You are my Son; today I have become your Father?’” The Nicene Creed also confesses, “We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father.” The author to the Hebrews is quoting Psalm 2, and there is where the answer lies. The Hebrew word “begotten” is לָלַד (Pronounced ya-lud). A father’s relationship to his son is usually expressed by the verb form of this word called a hiphil. When the word “ya-lud” is put into this verb form it has the literal connotation “to cause a woman to give birth,” or “to make a woman pregnant.” However, that verb form is not found here. Rather it is a verb form known as qal.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, we cannot be talking about a conception that happens between a father and mother. John Brug in his commentary on this section says, “The use of the qal, not the hiphil, to express the

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<sup>40</sup> Lyle Lange, ed. *Our Great Heritage I* (Northwestern Publishing House: Milwaukee, WI), 533.

<sup>41</sup> *Mormonism: A Christian Witness*, 25.

<sup>42</sup> John Brug, *A Commentary on Psalms 1-72* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2005), 129.

relationship of God the Father to God the Son warns the reader that it is not a physical conception and birth which are being described here but a special relationship.”<sup>43</sup>

So when the Bible talks about Jesus being begotten from eternity, what that really is talking about is the relationship within the Trinity. God is the Father, and Jesus is the Son of God in regard to the relationship of God; not an actual begetting.

Even though the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit were there at Creation, we generally give the Father “credit” for Creation. 1 Corinthians 8:6 says, “Yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live. “ Every living thing on earth was created by God; including humans. Genesis 1:1 says, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.” This was the beginning of time and existence. Before this, God was the only one who existed. He did not have spirit children waiting to come to earth, but rather one gets a much different picture. God was the only one there, and he is credited with creating everything, including humans.

Martin Luther says about our Heavenly Father, “I believe that God created me and all that exists, that he gave me my body and soul, eyes, ears, and all my members, my mind and all my abilities.”<sup>44</sup> God the Father has given us everything that we have; including our mental capacity and our abilities. We praise and thank God for everything that he has given us.

This is not the only thing that God the Father has done or is doing for us. He continues to provide for us day after day. “I believe that God still preserves me by richly and daily providing clothing and shoes, food and drink, property and home, spouse and children, land, cattle, and all I own, and all I need to keep my body and life.”<sup>45</sup> God the Father continues to give us everything we need in this life to live and to function. Everything we have is given to us by the Father. If we have a career that makes us a lot of money, it is the Father who provides us with the brains to do the job. He could take our mental capacity away from us at any time, but out of his love for us he does not. He continues providing us what we need to live in this life.

When we realize all that God has done for us, we really do not want the glory, but rather we want to give all the glory to God for everything. Notice the drastic difference compared to

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid, 129.

<sup>44</sup> David Kuske, *Luther's Catechism* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1998), 135.

<sup>45</sup> Luther's Catechism, 135.



the Mormon doctrine. They look to glorify man in everything as he achieves his own salvation, whereas Bible-believing Christians look to glorify our loving God.

Not only does God provide us with all of that, he also provides us with protection. He is able to do that because he is omnipresent; or all-present. God the Father is not restricted to one place at one time, but rather he is in all places at all times. David says about God in Psalm 139, “Where can I go from your Spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there/ If I rise on the wings of the dawn, if I settle at the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me, your right hand will hold me fast.” David proclaimed the truth that God is in all places at all times.

What a comforting thought for Christians! God is always where we are, and he is able to protect us from all harm and danger. He is able to be in all places at all times keeping watch over us. We have already looked at how he created all things including space and time. If God is the Creator of space and time, he can absolutely break the laws of physics and be in all places at once. As Christians, we can know that God has a watchful eye on each and every one of us. He is the one who is constantly providing for us and protecting us through this journey of life.

One final thing we know about our Heavenly Father is that he knew the plan of salvation before the creation of the world. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit knew before the creation of the world that Jesus would be sent into the world to save the world. It was the Father that sent “his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”<sup>46</sup>

### **Necessity for Clarity**

The reason one must clarify between the two Heavenly Fathers is because one is God and the other is a false god. Mormons believe that they are worshipping and praying to the real God, but their praise and prayers fall on deaf ears. Their prayers are going unanswered, and ultimately Mormons are not on the path to heaven. The sad thing is that Mormons believe that the god they are worshipping is actually the one that is in the Bible; that he is the one Scripture talks about. Yet that could not be further from the truth.

Christians who realize that there is a difference in Heavenly Fathers will be able to have a meaningful conversation with their Mormon friends. A good majority of Mormons believe that

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<sup>46</sup> John 3:16.

they are Christians, and that Christians and Mormons worship the same God. Even many Christians might think that Mormons and Christians worship the same God because both use the same language. However, a Christian who understands the differences between the two will be able to explain the differences. All it would take is a simple question. As you hear your Mormon friend mention Heavenly Father, ask them, “I have heard you mention Heavenly Father a lot. What has he done for you?” The answer should launch them into some of what has already been mentioned above. That will allow you to explain what your Heavenly Father has done for you namely sent his one and only Son to not only win salvation for you, but complete everything necessary for you to enter heaven.

### **Jesus Christ**

We have already touched briefly on the person of Jesus, but in order to understand the plan of salvation, a little more information is necessary. The person of Jesus Christ is a major difference between Mormons and Christians, and if Christians want to have a meaningful conversation with their Mormon friend, they will need to know the difference between the two meanings.

### **Latter-Day Saints**

“The third message is the testimony of our Lord and Savior. We declare to the world that Jesus is the Christ. We abhor the doctrine that He is a myth or a creation of conspiring men in the world. We denounce the idea that He was just a great teacher. We testify of the divinity of Jesus of Nazareth, that he is the Son of God, the Savior of the World.”<sup>47</sup>

“Christ is our Redeemer and our Savior. Except for him there would be no salvation and no redemption, and unless men come unto him and accept him as their Savior, they cannot have eternal life in his presence.”<sup>48</sup> Both of these quotes come from Mormon elders about Jesus Christ, and both of them sound very biblical. In fact if this is all that the Mormon Church has said about the topic of Jesus, one could conclude that they are indeed a Christian church. However, a closer look at what Mormons believe about Jesus will show that they are in fact not a Christian church.

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<sup>47</sup> Speaking the Truth in Love to Mormons, 77.

<sup>48</sup> Mormonism: A Christian Witness, 27.

Who is Jesus according to the Mormon doctrine? He is Heavenly Father's first-born spirit son. "Among the spirit children of Elohim<sup>49</sup> the firstborn was and is Jehovah or Jesus Christ to whom all others are juniors."<sup>50</sup> Mormons, therefore believe Jesus is not eternal, but rather that he has a definite starting point. However his starting point was before the creation of the world. "That Jesus Christ, whom we also know as Jehovah, was the executive of the Father, Elohim, in the work of creation is set forth in the book *Jesus the Christ*, chapter 4."<sup>51</sup>

As mentioned previously, Heavenly Father realized that his spirit children could only progress so much. They would not be able to advance to their full potential unless he did something. So he came up with a plan that would enable his spirit children to have the opportunity to become a god like him if they progressed. He knew that his children could not just go to earth and come back, but rather that they would need help. So Heavenly Father presented his plan before all of his spirit children and asked whom he should send. Jesus answered, "Here am I, send me."<sup>52</sup> Jesus was then foreordained to be the Savior of the world before the world was ever created.

How did Jesus become God? If Jesus was born like us, only a spirit child, how did he become God? The answer Mormons give is that he was obedient in the spirit world before the creation. "By obedience and devotion to the truth he attained that pinnacle of intelligence which ranked him as God, as the Lord Omnipotent, while yet in his pre-existent state."<sup>53</sup> Even Jesus needed to work his way up to godhead. Just because in Mormon theology he was the firstborn child of Heavenly Father and a heavenly mother did not mean that he was awarded any breaks from having to earn his way.

It seems, however, that just because he worked his way up to godhead before the creation it did not mean that he was in his final state. When he came to earth he had the opportunity to gain even more attributes and become even more powerful as he lived his life.

"In this life he received not of the fullness at the first, but went from grace to grace until, in the final triumph of the resurrection, he gained the fullness of all things; and all power was given him both in heaven and on earth. He has all truth, all power, all

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<sup>49</sup> Another name for Heavenly Father.

<sup>50</sup> Articles of Faith, 471.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, 467.

<sup>52</sup> Joseph Smith, *Pearl of Great Price* (Salt Lake City: Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, 1981), 9.

<sup>53</sup> Mormon Doctrine, 129.

knowledge; he comprehends all things, is infinite in all his attributes and powers; and he has given a law unto all things.”<sup>54</sup>

Not only did Jesus come to this earth to be our Savior, but in doing so he was rewarded for his efforts. He was given the “fullness of all things.” In his accomplishment, God gave him the ability to know all things, and he has maxed out in all of his attributes and powers. He became even greater through his efforts, and really progressed to the ultimate level. In fact, he cannot progress any further. There is nothing more that Jesus can do to gain anything else. The only one that is greater than he is the Father.

So what is the difference between Jesus and the rest of mankind? He was Heavenly Father’s firstborn, and he worked harder than the rest of the world. That is how he became a god. He is only divine because he worked hard to get there. According to Mormon doctrine this belief about Jesus makes sense. If he was literally born of the Father, the only thing that could make him different than the rest of mankind is that he worked harder and earned it.

It is clear that Mormon doctrine teaches that Jesus is only God through his works. He did enough good works and lived well enough to become God. However, they do not believe that he was God from all eternity

## **Bible**

The Bible teaches the truth about Jesus in a drastically different way. Earlier in the section of Heavenly Father, it was shown how Jesus was not born of God. It is important to realize that Jesus was not born of God, but rather he has always been. John 1 says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.” When John says “beginning” it is important to realize that he is talking about the beginning of time. In other words, he was with God when time started. He was not created, but always has been.

He is also 100% God not because he has earned it, but because he has always been God. “No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father’s side, has made him known.” Who is “God the One and Only, who is at the Father’s side?” Jesus. John very clearly here calls Jesus God. Not only does he call him God here, but he also says Jesus was God from eternity. Going back to that John 1 passage he says, “And the Word was God. He was

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<sup>54</sup> Ibid, 129.

with God in the beginning.” The Word, Jesus, was God, and he has always been God. Jesus never had a beginning date, but rather he has been with God from all eternity.

Since Jesus is God from all eternity, that means that he has had all power, all authority, all knowledge and wisdom since the beginning as well. It is clear from Scripture that Jesus had all these abilities in the New Testament while he was here on earth. One does not have to look any further than the miracles of Jesus to see that he has all power. He lets all people know that he is God and has all power by raising Lazarus from the dead after he was in the grave for four days! Not only did he raise Lazarus from the dead, but he also raised himself from the dead proving that even death does not have power over him.

Jesus also proved that he was all-knowing while here on earth. In John 1:48, Jesus proved that he was all knowing as he told Nathanael that he saw him sitting on the fig tree before Philip called him. Several other times throughout the Gospels Jesus demonstrates that he knows all things by knowing what the disciples are thinking about, or talking about when he cannot hear them.

### **Necessity for Clarity**

“Who is Jesus” is the most important question to answer when talking to your Mormon friend. The focal point of the Bible is Jesus and his saving work for mankind. Unfortunately Mormons do not believe in the Jesus of the Bible, which means that they do not believe in the real Jesus. They believe in a made up Jesus similar to the made up Heavenly Father that they worship. John 5:23 says, “He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him.” If someone does not know who Jesus is, it is impossible for them to worship the correct Father. Jesus is the one who reveals who the Heavenly Father is because he is the only one to see the Father. He is at the Father’s side, and he has made God’s will known to us.

How do you talk to your friend about Jesus? The heart of that discussion will want to focus on what Jesus has done for us. The discussion of Jesus will first want to focus on the completion of salvation because of what Jesus has done. I would not get into an argument about Jesus being from eternity. Save that for later. Rather you will want to talk about what Jesus’ completed work guarantees us. In order to do that, we need to look at the Atonement, and what Jesus completed for us. Before we can get into that discussion though, we must first look at The Fall and the effects it has on mankind.

## The Fall

In order to understand what Jesus did for mankind, one must understand why he had to come into the world in the first place. The reason begins with Adam and Eve's fall into sin.

### **Latter-Day Saints**

Mormons believe that after Heavenly Father and Jesus finished creating the world, they then chose Adam and Eve to be the first spirit children to become humans and live on earth. The account of how Adam and Eve fell into sin is similar to the Bible's account, but the outcomes are totally different. After Adam and Eve's fall into sin, Adam prophesied saying, "Blessed be the name of God, for because of my transgression my eyes are opened, and in this life I shall have joy, and again in the flesh I shall see God."<sup>55</sup> Eve also praised God and said, "Were it not for our transgression we never should have had seed, and never should have known good and evil, and the joy of our redemption, and the eternal life which God giveth unto all the obedient."<sup>56</sup>

Not only do Adam and Eve prophesy saying that it was a good thing that they fell into sin, but Mormons even go so far as to say that it was part of God's plan for this to happen. "Their part in our Father's plan was to bring mortality into the world."<sup>57</sup> Mormons believe that Adam and Eve had to bring sin into the world because that was God's plan. They believe that this was a necessary step in the plan of salvation if mankind wanted to have a chance at progressing as far as they possibly could.

This view on the fall actually makes a lot of sense based on what Mormon's believe about the plan of salvation. The plan of salvation was set in place for humans to prove themselves worthy of salvation. "(Jesus), like our Heavenly Father, wanted us to choose whether we would obey Heavenly Father's commandments. He knew we must be free to choose in order to prove ourselves worthy of exaltation."<sup>58</sup> If Adam and Eve had not fallen, human beings would not have the ability to prove themselves. They would have remained in a perfect state, but unable to progress to godhood. Mormons believe they need to be tested in order to prove themselves worthy of heaven, and if they remained perfect they could not do that. Pastor Cares

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<sup>55</sup> *Peal of Great Price*, 12.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, 12.

<sup>57</sup> *Gospel Principles*, 27.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, 13.

is right when he says, “Consequently Mormons commend rather than condemn Adam and Eve.”<sup>59</sup>

As pointed out, Mormons view the fall, not as a great tragedy, but as an event that provides them with an opportunity to become like their Heavenly Father. So what are some of those opportunities?

“Some people believe Adam and Eve committed a serious sin when they ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. However, latter-day Scriptures help us understand that their Fall was a necessary step in the plan of life and a great blessing to all of us. Because of the fall, we are blessed with physical bodies, the right to choose between good and evil, and the opportunity to gain eternal life. None of these privileges would have been ours had Adam and Eve remained in the garden.”<sup>60</sup>

One of the blessings that came from the fall was that all the spirit children would be able to have physical bodies. The only way spirit children would obtain a physical body was through Adam and Eve multiplying and having children who in turn had children. Mormons believe that before Adam and Eve became mortal they could not have children. They believe that in order to fulfill God’s command to “be fruitful and multiply,” Adam and Eve needed to fall into sin otherwise they would not have been able to be fruitful.

Humans are now blessed to have physical bodies, and the right to choose between good and evil. Mormons believe that if Adam and Eve had not fallen they would have only had the choice of good which would have prohibited them from proving themselves worthy. As long as they had the choice to choose between good and evil, they had the chance to gain eternal life.

There were, however, some bad consequences to the fall. Adam and Eve now became sinful because of their actions. However, this did not mean that all humans would be infected with sin. Rather each human being becomes sinful when they come to the age of accountability at the age of eight.<sup>61</sup> In fact, one of their articles of faith is, “We believe that men will be punished for their own sins, and not for Adam’s transgression.”<sup>62</sup> Therefore, Mormons do not believe that children are sinful from birth because they have not been able to choose yet whether to do good or evil. Mormons do not believe that being sinful is an effect of the fall.

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<sup>59</sup> Speaking the Truth in Love to Mormons, 61.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, 29.

<sup>61</sup> Mormon Doctrine, 853.

<sup>62</sup> Articles of Faith, 52.

Mormons believe the effects of the fall into sin were physical death and spiritual death. Before the Fall Adam and Eve had physical life, and their human body was proof of that. They also had spiritual life in the sense that they could walk and talk with God. However, the fall changed all of that. “As God had promised, they became mortal. They and their children would experience sickness, pain, and physical death.”<sup>63</sup> Because Adam and Eve sinned all people would experience death and general pain throughout this life. Their sin also led to spiritual death. This does not mean that they are going to end up in hell; rather it is just a separation from God for a little while. “Because of their transgression, Adam and Eve also suffered spiritual death. This meant they and their children could not walk and talk face-to-face with God. Adam and Eve and their children were separated from God both physically and spiritually.”<sup>64</sup> Mormons believe the effects of the fall were merely physical and a type of spiritual separation. Sin was not part of the consequences of the fall because each person has the ability to choose whether they do right or wrong, and are therefore responsible for their own sin.

Pastor Cares sums up the positive way Mormon’s think about the fall nicely:

1. The fall made man mortal.
2. One major characteristic of being mortal is the capacity to have children.
3. God’s spirit children need bodies to progress, therefore it is essential that mankind has the capacity to have children.
4. Adam’s fall, by giving mankind this capacity, was a blessing.<sup>65</sup>

## **Bible**

Again this is a stark contrast from the fall that we see in the Bible. All of Scripture states that the fall was a tragedy, and that nothing positive came from the fall except for God’s promise that he would send a Savior to save us from sin and death. If someone were to read through Genesis 3, which is the account of the fall, one would see that there is no rejoicing from Adam and Eve. One would see that there was nothing but negative consequences, and horrible ones at that.

At the heart of this discussion is the question, “Why did God create humans in the first place?” God created humans to love and care for them. He also created humans that they may love and worship him in response to the love he was showing to them. This is seen in the

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<sup>63</sup> Gospel Principles, 28.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid, 29.

<sup>65</sup> Speaking the Truth in Love to Mormons, 62.



creation account where God created everything perfectly, and all things were created for mankind. Mankind was supposed to rule over all things because God created all things for him. Mankind would realize that everything he had was because of God's love for him, and he would in turn worship and thank God for the love he had shown him. It was all based around love: God's love for his creation, and human's love for God.

When Adam and Eve fell into sin, the perfect love was broken, bringing only evil consequences with it. The consequences were universal from the moment they sinned. Eve would have pain in child-bearing while Adam would have difficulties in working. Their relationship was not going to be perfect which they already experienced as soon as the fall occurred. Instead of loving one another, they were too busy blaming one another for the fall.

They would also physically die as they would return to the dust that they were. Yet physical death was the least of their concerns as God announced to them that they also would suffer from spiritual death. Spiritual death was more than just not being able to walk and talk with the Father, but spiritual death is a separation from God that ultimately leads to eternal separation from him in hell. That is what spiritual death is. It is a separation from our God because of our sins which leads to eternal pain and punishment being separated from God. The Bible describes eternal death as being thrown into a burning lake of sulfur where people are tormented day and night. That is eternal death; the result of sin.

Not only is physical death and spiritual death a consequence, but everyone has what is called "original sin." Original sin is what Adam and Eve passed down to us because of their sin. Sometimes this term is called our "Old Adam." It is the part of us that loves to sin. David says in Psalm 51:5 says, "Surely, I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me." The moment a baby is conceived, the baby is sinful. That is a direct result of Adam and Eve's sin.

The fall was not an opportunity for humans. It was not a falling downward yet forward, but rather it was a pure tragedy. If that is how the Bible ended, we would all end up in the burning lake of sulfur where we would be tormented day and night. Sin is detestable to God, and nothing with sin can ever enter his presence. It was shown earlier how no human being could ever remove sin from themselves. When people trying to remove sin from themselves it is comparable to someone shining up the outside of an apple that has had the core eating away by a worm. No matter how shiny you get the outside, the inside is still completely corrupt, and there

is nothing you can do to fix that. Since Adam and Eve's fall into sin, every person to ever live, not named Jesus Christ, has been that corrupted apple.

### **Necessity for Clarity**

Obviously the way Mormons and Christians look at this topic is completely different. The biggest issue here is really the downplaying of sin. Where Mormons look at Adam and Eve's sin as a good thing because it helps us progress, the Bible tell us that Adam and Eve's sin is what makes us unworthy to live before God. It is what makes us imperfect. As long as we have sin in our lives, we will never be able to be perfect on our own. That means that no matter how hard we try, we are still imperfect and unworthy to stand before our Lord.

If your Mormon neighbor brings up the fall, they will do so in a positive way most likely. When they do, take the time to explain how the fall was actually a bad thing. The conversation will have to focus on sin and the affect that it has in our lives. A good place to start is Matthew 5:48 where Jesus says, "Be perfect, therefore, as your Heavenly Father is perfect." If you remember, one of the Mormons' goals is to achieve perfection in this life. They often use this verse to show that it is possible to become perfect because they believe Jesus would not give them a command they cannot complete. However, it really is not possible at all. When you present this verse to your Mormon friend, really focus on the word "be." As Pastor Cares says, "Everything hinges on the little word "be" and the fact that it is a present tense. The point we need to make with Mormons is that Jesus commands us to be perfect, not to become perfect."<sup>66</sup> As Pastor Cares points out, a good illustration is to ask them what they mean when they tell their children to be good? Does that mean for your children to become good in 10 years, or to be good right now?<sup>67</sup> Obviously it means be good right now. When Jesus says, "Be perfect," that means be perfect right now. As we look at our lives we are far from perfect, and that is all because of the fall. Once you establish the fact that we are not perfect and cannot become perfect, lead them to the sweet message of Jesus' perfect life in our place.

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<sup>66</sup> Speaking the Truth in Love to Mormons, 172.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid, 173.

## Agency

One word that you may have heard your Mormon friend say is the word “agency.” A better understanding of this word will help you see where they are coming from with their outlook on the Fall and choices in their lives. To a Mormon, life is full of choices and how you react to them.

### **Latter-Day Saints**

Agency is simply the ability to choose between good and evil. Mormons believe this to be one of the most vital aspects of Heavenly Father’s plan of salvation, and the reason is pretty simple. If someone does not have agency, then they cannot choose whether or not to do good works. If you cannot choose to do good works, you have no chance of becoming perfect and ultimately progressing to godhood. “If it were not for the law of agency, there could be no judgment according to works and consequently no rewards or punishments.”<sup>68</sup> Remember one of the biggest things for Mormons is progressing to godhead, and without the gift of agency that is impossible.

A big thing among Mormons is their belief they can prove they are worthy and that they can become perfect. Agency helps them prove that as they make better and better choices in their lives. What is really great about agency is that the more right choices you make the stronger your agency becomes. This enables you to make better and better choices. “As we obey each of our Father’s commandments, we grow in wisdom and strength of character. Our faith increases. We find it easier to make right choices.”<sup>69</sup>

Once again, Mormonism shows that they are glorifying mankind and not God. It is all about man and his ability to gain perfection, eternal life, and to become a god.

### **Bible**

Does the Bible teach agency? Not in the sense that Mormons teach. By ourselves we cannot do anything to help out our salvation, or contribute to it. The Bible does teach that we do have the ability to choose certain things in this life. For instance, we have the ability to choose if we are going to wear a red shirt or a green shirt today. We have the ability to choose whether we

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<sup>68</sup> Mormon Doctrine, 27.

<sup>69</sup> Gospel Principles, 19.

are going to go to church on Sunday morning, or are we going to skip to sleep in instead of worshipping our Lord and Savior. But do our choices have eternal consequences? Can our good choices actually earn us eternal life? No, our choices cannot do anything like that. In fact, if we were left up to our own choices, we would be doomed. Romans 3:10-12 says, “There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good not even one.” Even our “good” choices cannot help us because apart from Christ no one can do good. Even the “good” acts that we do are not good in God’s eyes apart from Christ. Isaiah tells us, “All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags.”<sup>70</sup>

The only thing that grants us eternal life is Jesus’ perfect life and innocent death in our place. It is our faith in that truth that gains us eternal life; not how many good choices we have made in this life.

### **Necessity for Clarity**

Knowing why Mormons think so highly of their agency helps to understand their thought process when it comes to obtaining salvation. They will want to focus on their agency because that is the cause or their means by which they obtain salvation. The more they choose to do good, the more they gain. A place to start when talking about agency is that Romans 3:10-12 passage that was mentioned above. They will most likely tell you that it is not true; that there are plenty of people who do good in the world. Yes, to the world they seem like good works, but to God they are not. Once you point out Romans, then point to the Isaiah 64:6 passage and really emphasize that even the acts that look righteous are filthy to God apart from faith in Christ and his completed work of salvation for us. When we think we are making good decisions and gaining heaven our works are like filthy rags. The only way that we can make right choices is through Jesus. He is the vine, we are the branches. Apart from faith in him saving us from our sins and from death, we can do nothing.

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<sup>70</sup> Isaiah 64:6.

## Atonement of Jesus Christ

So far it has been pretty evident that Mormons believe they can be perfect and figure out their own salvation. What role, then, does Jesus' suffering and death play? Understanding this point of doctrine is very crucial when talking to your Mormon friend.

### **Latter-Day Saints**

“The great sacrifice He made to pay for our sins and overcome death is called the Atonement.”<sup>71</sup> That statement sounds pretty good. In fact, someone could easily think that this is taken straight from the Bible. Yet this is a statement found in a Mormon book. What do Mormons really mean by this statement?

Mormonism does teach that Jesus suffered and died. “Through the atonement, Jesus Christ redeems all people from the effects of the Fall.” Recalling what the effects of the Fall were, one will be able to decipher what Mormons mean by this statement. It is exactly what we see in their teachings as well. “To atone is to ransom, reconcile, expiate, redeem, reclaim, absolve, propitiate, make amends, pay the penalty. Thus the atonement of Christ is designed to ransom men from the effects of the fall of Adam in that both spiritual and temporal death are conquered; their lasting effect is nullified.”<sup>72</sup> Notice all the words that they use for the Atonement: atone, ransom, reconcile, redeem. All those terms in Mormonism refer to how Jesus lived a perfect life and died an innocent death so that we will be resurrected one day, but that is it. Jesus did not make payment for our sins.

This truth is seen in the following quote, “Although we are redeemed unconditionally from the universal effects of the Fall, we are accountable for our own sins.”<sup>73</sup> The universal effects of the fall are physical and spiritual death. As stated here people are responsible for their own sins. Pastor Cares says, ““As these statements reveal, Mormons apply Jesus’ atonement mainly to Adam’s fall. They believe his suffering wiped out its effect, namely, permanent physical death. Because of Jesus’ atonement, all people will be resurrected.”<sup>74</sup>

What Jesus’ death and resurrection gives to the human race is the ability to be resurrected. All people will rise from the dead one day, and the grave will not be able to hold

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<sup>71</sup> Gospel Principles, 59.

<sup>72</sup> Mormon Doctrine, 62.

<sup>73</sup> True to the Faith, 16.

<sup>74</sup> Speaking the Truth in Love to Mormons, 69.

them down. However, when they are raised from the dead, they will be raised to judgment. “He did his part to help us return to our heavenly home. It is now up to each of us to do our part and become worthy of exaltation.”<sup>75</sup> Jesus did the part that we could not do: save us from death. We are still left to obtain salvation on our own. In other words, Jesus has given us an opportunity to get into heaven. Before him, we had no shot because death needed to be conquered. Now we have a chance to get into heaven because we are guaranteed to be resurrected where we can stand before Heavenly Father and tell him why we deserve to be in heaven. Getting in is completely our responsibility. “The atonement of Jesus Christ redeems all mankind from the fall of Adam and causes all to be answerable for their own manner of life.”<sup>76</sup>

The Mormons do speak of Jesus paying for their sins. However sins to a Mormon are simply times when they have messed up and made wrong decisions. Jesus does not just take sins away, but rather he is more like a creditor. He paid for sins on the cross and people pay him back by living their lives according to his terms.<sup>77</sup>

Mormons like to call themselves Christians because they talk about Jesus, and Jesus does have a role within the plan of salvation. However, salvation really is in the hands of the people, and it is up to them to earn it.

## **Bible**

When Christians learn the word “atonement” many are taught the phrase “at-one-with.” This conveys the idea that Christians are now at one with God because of what Christ has done. While this is a true statement, having a deeper understanding of this word would help when talking to your Mormon friend.

Jesus’ atonement does make us at one with God, but the question is how. By Jesus’ perfect life and innocent death he paid the price for our sins. We could never pay the price, but Jesus so graciously did that for us. It is because of Jesus’ work that our sins are taken away. Hebrews 10:17-18 state this truth very clearly, “‘Their sins are lawless acts I will remember no more.’ And where these have been forgiven there is no longer any sacrifice for sin.” We do not

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<sup>75</sup> Gospel Principles, 16.

<sup>76</sup> LDS Bible Dictionary, 617.

<sup>77</sup> There is a parable in *Gospel Principles*, 63-65 that shows how a man paid the debt another man owed. The man who paid the debt said, “You will pay the debt to me and I will set the terms. It will not be easy, but it will be possible. I will provide a way.” The creditor in the story is very clearly Jesus, and this is how Mormons describe how Jesus paid for their sins.

have any obligations to pay Jesus back for what he has done for us. In fact, there is nothing that we could do to ever pay him back.

Since Jesus has paid for our sins, we are currently right now perfect in God's sight. Hebrews 10:14 says, "Because by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy." We have been made holy through Jesus' sacrifice. God sees us through the cross of Christ. "Though your sins are as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow."<sup>78</sup> Our sins have been washed away, and we are as white and clean as a fresh snowfall before God. Christ's perfect life and innocent death takes away all of our sins before God.

Not only have our sins been forgiven, but because of Christ's perfect life, innocent death, and resurrection from the dead, we will rise from the dead one day. Christ conquered the grave as he rose from the dead on Easter morning. Death no longer has power over us. We will rise, not to present ourselves to God in hopes we get in, but we will rise to eternal life because of what Christ has done for us. Our salvation completely rests on Christ shoulders, and he won it for us. Titus 3:5 says, "He saved us, not because of the righteous things we had done, but because of his great love for us." We have absolutely no effect on our salvation.

The atonement of Jesus Christ was the payment he made to buy us back: his perfect life and his innocent death which pays for our sins and guarantees us eternal life with our Heavenly Father.

### **Necessity for Clarity**

The necessity to clarify the atonement is obviously a big one. The Bible says that the only way to obtain forgiveness of sins is through Jesus Christ and his work. We do not have to pay him back, but it is purely a gift of God. A gift stops being a gift when you have to work for it. If you need to work for it, then becomes a wage. When we talk to our Mormon friend, we need to emphasize how Jesus took our sins away. Pastor Cares points to the section in Hebrews 10:10-18 as a good section of Scripture to show our Mormon friends. In this section it emphasizes how Christ was the ultimate sacrifice for us. We no longer need to offer any sacrifice for sins. Also in verse 10, it points to how we have already been made perfect in Christ. "And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus once for all." Really focus on the "we have been made holy" part. It is something that has happened, and

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<sup>78</sup> Isaiah 1:18.

has lasting effects. We are holy, worthy, and perfect in God's sight because of Christ's atoning work as he lived a perfect life and died for our sins.

One suggestion Pastor Cares gives is to start by defining what forgiveness is. You can do this by presenting a scenario in which you let your friend borrow \$10. One day you tell your friend that you forgive their debt of \$10. What would that mean to them?<sup>79</sup> The obvious answer is that they would no longer need to pay you back. That is how it is with God. Jesus has paid our debt and forgiven our debt. We do not need to pay him back whatsoever. We are debt free and now perfect in the sight of God, and it is only through faith in what Christ has done for us that we receive perfection in his sight.

### Grace

People can easily become confused when talking to their Mormon friend especially on the topic of grace. Both Christians and Mormons can agree they are saved only by God's grace. What do Mormons mean by that, though, and what does the Bible mean when it says we are saved by God's grace?

### **Latter-Day Saints**

“The word *grace*, as used in the scriptures, refers primarily to the divine help and strength we receive through the Atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ.”<sup>80</sup>

It is evident that Mormons do not have the same meaning of the word grace as the Bible teaches. One of the books of Mormon, the book of Nephi, says, “For we know that it is by grace we are saved, after all we can do.”<sup>81</sup> (2 Nephi 25:23). Mormons believe that they cannot be saved purely out of God's love for them, but that effort is required on their part. Again this goes back to their need to prove themselves worthy before God. “By his grace and by our faith in His atonement and our repentance for our sins, we receive the strength to do the necessary works that we otherwise could not do by our own power.”<sup>82</sup> Essentially Mormons look at grace as a booster shot that helps them perform the tasks they must do to gain eternal life. It helps you carry out each step in the plan of salvation.

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<sup>79</sup> Speaking the Truth in Love to Mormons, 186.

<sup>80</sup> True to the Faith, 77.

<sup>81</sup> Book of Mormon.

<sup>82</sup> Ezra Benson, *Come Unto Christ* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1983), 8.



Not only does grace help you perform your tasks, but it covers anything that you have left undone. If you live your life and try your hardest to be perfect, God, by his grace, will take care of the rest. Referring to 2 Nephi 25:23, Ezra Benson says,

What is meant by the phrase after all we can do? After all we can do includes our best effort. After all we can do includes living His commandments. After all we can do includes loving our fellowmen and praying for those who regard us as adversary. After all we can do means clothing the naked, feeding the hungry, visiting the sick. After all we can do means leading chaste, clean, and pure lives, being scrupulously honest in all our dealings, and treating others the way we would want to be treated.<sup>83</sup>

According to this definition of what grace does for human beings, it is easy to see how grace only covers what we have left undone by our shortcomings. Grace only kicks in when one has tried his or her best in every aspect of life.

Not only do Mormons teach this, but they also condemn those who believe that grace means salvation is free. “One of the most fallacious doctrines originated by Satan and propounded by man is that man is saved alone by the grace of God; that belief in Jesus Christ alone is all that is needed for salvation.”<sup>84</sup> If someone were to claim it is by grace alone they were saved, Mormons would believe that they are from Satan. “Flattery is from Satan...For instance: Certain saved-by-grace-alone fanatics flatter their followers into believing they can be saved through no act other than confessing Christ with their lips.”<sup>85</sup>

When your Mormon friend says that they are saved by God’s grace, they very clearly do not mean they are completely saved by God’s grace. Rather, they are saved by God’s booster shot that gives them the power to complete their work, help them to do works that they otherwise would not be able to do, and whatever is left over God will cover.

## **Bible**

If someone were to ask a Christian what “grace” means, they would most likely say, “God’s undeserved love for me.” While this is true, what do we mean when we say, “God’s undeserved love for me?”

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>84</sup> Speaking the Truth in Love to Mormons, 82.

<sup>85</sup> Mormon Doctrine, 287.

Ephesians 2:4-5 says, “But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved.” A corpse cannot bring itself to life. It cannot do anything to help in its revival. Rather it takes an outside source to bring someone from death to life. That is what God has done for us. He has brought us to life, and we have been saved only because of his great love for us. In other words, by grace we have been saved! Grace is God’s undeserved love for human beings and is seen in the act of saving human beings from eternal life in hell.

Some may say, “Okay, I will grant that God brings us to life, but then it is up to us to figure out our salvation.” Paul dismisses these types of thoughts as he continues in Ephesians 2:8-9, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.” It is purely by God’s love for us that we are saved. There is absolutely nothing that we can do to gain eternal life. In fact, God has taken care of it all. He does not leave anything up to us, but has completely won salvation for us by Jesus’ perfect life and innocent death. He gives us salvation out of his love, and we are merely recipients of this gift.

### **Necessity for Clarity**

Knowing how Mormons and Christians differ on their views of grace will help you when you talk to your Mormon friend. Talking about grace is a great way to lead the conversation back to Jesus. If you hear your Mormon friend say something about God’s grace, take the opportunity to talk about it. One way you can do this is to simply add the word “completely.” That way the sentence looks like this: “I am completely saved by God’s grace.” If you simply say, “I am saved by God’s grace,” your Mormon friend will say they are too, and you will talk right past each other. By adding the word “completely,” you will make it clear that it is only because of God’s grace that you are saved. From there you will be able to point them back to Jesus, and his saving work. You will be able to point them to how his perfect life and innocent death has made you holy in the sight of God right this second.

### **Gospel of Jesus Christ**

You may hear your Mormon friends talk about the gospel of Jesus Christ, and think that both of you are on the same page. Both of you may even say phrases like, “Thank you, Lord, for

the gospel.” However, again we see that Mormons and the biblical definition of the word “gospel” are different.

### **Latter-Day Saints**

“The gospel of Jesus Christ is the plan of salvation. It embraces all the laws, principles, doctrines, rites, ordinances, acts, powers, authorities, and keys necessary to save and exalt men on earth.” To a Mormon the gospel is what we have to follow and complete in order to gain salvation. They consider it good news because it shows them how to live their lives worthy enough of salvation. “We believe that through the Atonement of Christ, all mankind may be saved, by obedience to the laws and ordinances of the Gospel.”<sup>86</sup> The steps to the gospel of Jesus Christ are the following: Faith, repentance, baptism, reception of the Holy Ghost through the laying on of hands, and endurance to the end.

We have already seen multiple times how Mormons have a works-based religion. So what role does faith play? A Mormon must believe in what Jesus has done for them. They cannot progress or receive any grace if there is no faith in Jesus’ saving work. That includes his perfect life and innocent death that conquered the grave. If you do not have that faith you cannot obtain salvation. This makes sense because if you do not believe in it, then you cannot take advantage of the blessings. However, Mormons strongly oppose salvation by faith alone. In fact, they call that doctrine a doctrine of the devil. “This truth (that good works count toward salvation) was clearly set forth both by Christ and the apostles, and the vigor with which it was declared may be an indication of the early development of a most pernicious doctrine—that of justification by belief alone.”<sup>87</sup>

Not only do you need to have faith, but you need to be repentant. “Repentance sometimes requires great courage, much strength, many tears, unceasing prayers, and untiring efforts to live the commandments of the Lord.”<sup>88</sup> Repentance to a Mormon is not simply changing your lifestyle, but obeying God’s law perfectly after you repent. They believe they can turn from their evil ways and keep God’s law perfectly. It is only when they accomplish this that they consider themselves to have complete repentance. “Nevertheless, he that repents and does

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<sup>86</sup> Articles of Faith, 74.

<sup>87</sup> Articles of Faith, 107.

<sup>88</sup> Gospel Principles, 109.

the commandments of the Lord shall be forgiven.”<sup>89</sup> Repentance to a Mormon can be summed up in this: If you are sorry for your sins, then prove it. Keep God’s laws. That is repentance to a Mormon.

When someone is baptized into the Mormon Church, they do not look at it as a blessing, but rather a covenant relationship with God. “Alma taught that when we are baptized we make a covenant with the Lord. We promise to do certain things, and God promises to bless us in return.”<sup>90</sup> When a person is baptized, that person agrees to the following: “Come into God’s fold, bear one another’s burdens, stand as a witness of God at all times and in all places, and serve God and keep his commands.”<sup>91</sup> When someone is baptized, that is the covenant they enter into. As long as they keep up their end of the bargain, God promises to bless them in return with the following: “Forgive our sins, pour out his Spirit more abundantly upon us, give us daily guidance and the help of the Holy Ghost, let us come forth in the resurrection, and give us eternal life.”<sup>92</sup> Mormons make baptism something that you have to do instead of a blessing from God. Again the human effort is evident in Mormon thinking. It permeates every teaching.

The Mormons talk about how people need to receive the Holy Ghost. However, not everyone is able to receive the Holy Ghost; rather only people who are worthy can receive him. “The gift of the Holy Ghost is the privilege—given to people who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ, been baptized, and been confirmed as members of the Church—to receive continual guidance and inspiration from the Holy Ghost.”<sup>93</sup> If a Mormon wants to receive the Holy Ghost, they have to do more than hear God’s Word, but they have to show they are worthy of such an amazing gift. How do they show they are worthy to receive such a gift? “To be worthy to have the help of the Holy Ghost, we must seek earnestly to obey the commandments of God. We must keep our thoughts and actions pure.”<sup>94</sup>

The final step of the gospel is to persevere unto the end. A Mormon must hold to the Mormon faith unto death otherwise they will never inherit eternal life.

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<sup>89</sup> Doctrine and Covenants 1:31.

<sup>90</sup> Ibid, 117.

<sup>91</sup> Ibid 118.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid, 118.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid, 121.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, 123.

## **Bible**

The biblical definition of the word “gospel” is “good news.” This news is not good because Jesus has given us a plan that we can follow and gain our salvation, but rather it is good news because Christ has done it all for us. There is nothing left for us to accomplish. We praise God there is not anything left to be accomplished because we would not have been able to accomplish even the tiniest part of our salvation. The good news that the Bible proclaims is that our salvation has totally been won and accomplished for us through Christ’s perfect life and innocent death in our place.

It is true that the Bible stresses the need to have faith, but faith is merely an instrument in which we receive salvation. John 3:16 says, “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.” Faith in Jesus is the means by which Jesus gives us heaven. That is the definition of the gospel! That is what good news is! “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast.”<sup>95</sup>

Repentance plays a role in the Christian’s life. A Christian is aware of the sins that he or she commits because God’s law makes their sins known to them. The law reminds people how they cannot gain heaven because they cannot be perfect. When a Christian lies down at night, it does not take long for them to remember the wrong they had done that day. When a Christian repents of his or her sins and asks God to forgive them, he takes their sins away “as far as the east is from the west.” (Psalm 103:12). A Christian will then try his or her best to turn from those sins, not because they need to show they are worthy for eternal life, but rather out of thanks and appreciation for all our Savior has done for us. When a Christian realizes the depths of their sin, and then realizes the depth of the Savior’s love for them, a Christian will naturally want to turn from their sinful ways.

Baptism is a part of the gospel in the sense that it brings the recipients blessings of the gospel. Baptism is in no way something that people do for God, or some outward act of joining the church. Rather it is something that God has established in which he offers the recipient blessings. Those blessings include: salvation (1 Peter 3:21), repentance (in regard to a change of heart and mind) (Luke 3:3), regeneration and Rebirth (Titus 3:5), the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38), a clean conscience (1 Peter 3:21), membership of God’s Holy Church made up of all

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<sup>95</sup> Ephesians 2:8,9.

believers (1 Corinthians 12:13), being clothed with Christ (Galatians 3:27), and finally the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38). When a person is baptized, these are the blessings they receive. Never once in the Bible does it give the impression that Christians do something for God when they are baptized, but only that God does something for them. He blesses the recipient more than we could ever imagine.

Christians receive the Holy Spirit<sup>96</sup> through baptism. Peter says in Acts 2, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” Christians do not have to prove that they are worthy enough to receive the Holy Spirit. If that were so, they would never be able to receive the Holy Spirit because they would never be worthy enough. Another way that people receive the Holy Spirit is by hearing God’s Word, the Bible. Scripture clearly states in 1 Corinthians 12:3 that “no one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit.” If someone believes Jesus is their Lord and Savior that means faith has been worked in them and that is one of the gifts the Holy Spirit works in a person. “Faith comes from hearing the message and the message is heard through the word of Christ.” Christians, therefore, receive the Holy Spirit when they hear the gospel message. When a person hears God’s Word, the Holy Spirit is at work in them creating faith and strengthening faith through the gospel message.

The Bible does encourage us to remain faithful to the end, and Jesus himself tells us to remain faithful even to the point of death and he will give you the crown of life. (Revelation 2:10). Though Jesus is commanding it, it is also a comfort to the Christian. As Christians face persecution throughout the world Jesus encourages them by telling them to not give up their faith in him even in the face of persecution. Christians can have confidence when they face persecution knowing that Jesus will take them to heaven and give them the crown of eternal life. Through our faith in Jesus we will obtain eternal life not because we have earned it, but because of Jesus’ love for us sinners.

### **Necessity for Clarity**

Understanding your Mormon friend means the gospel provides him steps to follow to his salvation will help you when talking with him. It will help you realize their good news is really

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<sup>96</sup> Mormons refer to the Holy Spirit as the Holy Ghost because that is the King James’ translation of it. The Mormons believe that the King James Version of the Bible is the only legitimate one. So if you are trying to witness to a Mormon, you could gain ground and credibility by using the King James Version.

not good news at all based on what we know from Scripture. We have seen several times that as sinful human beings we cannot do anything to gain our salvation, and yet that is why Mormons praise God; for giving them steps to follow to gain eternal life, and prove that they are worthy of eternal life.

Once again you will want to direct their attention back to Jesus' saving act. That is what the gospel is after all. When you hear your Mormon friend talk about the gospel, simply ask them what that is to them. They might be confused at first because they think that the gospel is universal within the Christian church, but once they explain it you will be able to show them the gospel is something totally different from their explanation. Do not get caught up in following steps, but rather concentrate on Jesus. It is his message of his perfect life and innocent death that is the good news! That is the gospel!

### **Conclusion**

The need for understanding Christian terminology and Mormon terminology could not be clearer. Mormons act, say, and look like Christians but they believe something far different than what the Bible teaches. They teach salvation by works, and that you can become a god masked in the name of Christianity. Jesus said, "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves." The Mormon teachings are exactly that. They look good, but really they do nothing but tear you apart. They do this by leading people further from the truth of their Savior that he lived and died for them! It is tricky too because they do praise God, and they do hold Jesus in high regard, but they do not have the right God or the right Jesus.

Understanding Mormon terminology and Christian terminology of key words of salvation will help you witness to your Mormon friend. The words are the exact same words and yet they mean completely different things. If you are looking to start witnessing to your Mormon friends, starting here is a great place to begin. My prayer is that I have given you a starting point not only to understand what they are saying, but also a starting point for witnessing. I personally feel talking to your Mormon friend about what these key words mean is important. It is the message of Jesus that saves sinners. What you do not want to do is get caught up on topics that do not pertain to the plan of salvation. That will only further delay them getting the true gospel message.

There are so many great resources out there for a Christian to learn about Mormonism. If you would like to learn more about Mormon culture, practices, and in depth look at other doctrines I highly recommend Pastor Mark Cares book *Speaking the Truth in Love to Mormons*. He will not only give you great insights on these topics, but he also gives fantastic practical advice for witnessing in general to your Mormon neighbor.

Another book that is significantly shorter than Pastor Cares' book, but still contains a summary of Mormonism is *Mormonism: How to Respond* by Edward Kaiser. I found this book really helpful for breaking down Mormon doctrine and giving me the things I needed to know about Mormonism.

One thing you may have noticed from my paper is that I did not conduct any interviews with Mormon missionaries or any Mormon leaders. Talking with people who have had experiences with Mormon missionaries and leaders I was told that these people are trained to speak in a way that is confusing and you can never be sure what they mean. Based on the research that I did, that makes sense. There are so many phrases that sound so good to a Christian, but when you remember what they truly mean you realize they are not Christian at all.

God has blessed us with the greatest message of all time, and the message is an endless one. God's Word has been there from the beginning and will continue on through eternity. Jesus promised us, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away." We have that message not because we are worthy of it, but because God has showered down his love on us. He has graciously given us the opportunity to spread his Word to all people, including our Mormon friends.

God be with you as you rejoice daily that you know your salvation has been completed for you, and as you lead your Mormon friends to that same truth.



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