

Have you wondered why Mormons want good Christians from good churches to switch to Mormonism? Why 30,000 young Mormon men and women start their two-year proselyting missions every year? Why the Christian public is the primary source for converts to Mormonism?

• Christians Who Abandoned Mormonism

And on page 2—

- Mormons Tell : what their religion really is
- Why Mormonism May Look Attractive
- Snapshot : Mormons In Church

What is it about Mormonism that each year attracts nearly a third of a million people, churched and unchurched, from America and scores of other countries?

INSIGHT

For decades the Mormon church knowingly sent missionaries to tell others that Mormonism is true and that they had received that assurance privately from God Himself—whether they had or not.

But in October 2002 a Mormon leader “raised the bar”: Missionaries now must receive their private revelations of Mormonism’s “restored gospel” before they will be sent to say so.

Also part of the upgraded plan: missionary service will no longer be used to reform errant young men.¹

What attracts them to water baptism by immersion in this new American religion based in Salt Lake City? Why do they choose to submit to the handful of Mormon men who claim to be the only true living apostles of Jesus Christ?

Mormons tell their stories on page 2. But first, look at four Christians, who found Mormonism attractive until they learned of its doctrines.*

4 Believers: Encounters & Escapes

• In Germany, **Brigitte** listened to and was baptized by American Mormon missionaries. Ten years later she heard the Good News from another American and believed in Jesus Christ for her eternal salvation. She is not bitter about her years in Mormonism, but is glad to have left behind its endless requirements for earning eternal life, and its prophets and temples and new scriptures. In Christ alone she found an eternal, secure peace with God.

• **Rich** had trusted Christ for his salvation when he was 14, but Mormons persuaded him to be baptized in their church. In high school Christian friends continued to warn him, and as a senior he left Mormonism and committed himself to Christ. A key factor in

his return to Christ was the Bible, and Isaiah 44:8, which contradicts a foundational Mormon belief in “the Gods.”

• **Chris** admired the young men serving as Mormon missionaries. Disappointed with an ill-informed response about Mormonism from his pastor, he was baptized into the Mormon church. Only then did he learn of the unbiblical doctrines of Mormonism. A year later

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he withdrew his membership and returned to a Christian church.

• **Jay** earnestly sought a private signal, a feeling, from God that Mormonism was true, as Mormon missionaries had proposed he should do. A godly youth pastor taught him from the Bible, and Jay abandoned the false and futile search for truth in Mormon teachings and feelings.

Among Mormon Attractions . . .

1. Music. Mormon Tabernacle Choir: sacred, classical, patriotic, and other recordings and performances.

2. Doctrine. Universal salvation. Few will be excluded from a glorious eternal kingdom. The living may help the dead. Men may become Almighty Gods.

3. Emphasis on family, community, patriotism, self-reliance, work, education, and traditional morality.

4. In language and practices (not basic doctrine), similarities to Christian faith.

5. History of persecution, ingenuity, and growth promoted in massive PR, and government and church sites and museums.

6. Rigid, authoritarian, bureaucratic. One true church. One true prophet. New scriptures, with more to come.

Some will find other attractions. See item below.

Mormons Tell : It's Their Prophet

• A fellow-leader described the Mormon church’s current living prophet as “an island in a sea of storm,” “a lighthouse” to the lost, the one the world seeks: “to hear his words, see his countenance, receive his teachings and feel his spirit.”²

• An 18-year-old convert celebrated her one-year anniversary as a Mormon by testifying to passengers on a train to help them “understand what we believe”—“that President Gordon B. Hinckley is a prophet”³

• A Mormon woman told of an overwhelming good feeling, a revelation, when she first saw her prophet. She knew then that he was the one true living prophet.⁴

Mormon religion. Sixth in a series.

S N A P S H O T

MORMONS IN CHURCH. Congregations called wards or branches

meet Sundays for three hours. Pastors are unpaid laymen called bishops or presidents, and rarely have formal education in the Bible, preaching, and other subjects common for leaders in other churches. Authorities assign members to their congregations; a member’s preference normally is not a factor. Often church buildings are used for more than one congregation; thus, Mormons may be assigned to attend during morning, afternoon, or even the evening hours. Time periods normally will be rotated each year among congregations sharing a single building.

Congregations meet for Sunday School and other classes (2 classes of about 1 hour each) and a general meeting. General meetings may be called “worship services,” but are more commonly called “sacrament meetings,” and the first sacrament meeting each month is a “fast and testimony meeting,” for which Mormons may skip two meals. During the meeting members testify that they have a testimony; i.e., a private revelation that their church, prophets, and scriptures are true.

Sunday classes and services are open to the public. Preferred dress is “Sunday-best.” Services include traditional/conservative hymns accompanied by piano or organ. Sacrament (water and bread) is served weekly. No offering is taken. Visitors are not asked to raise their hands or register. Rarely are people asked to stand to pray or sing, or to greet one another during a service. Rarely is there a formal reading of Scripture or prayer, other than brief prayers to begin and end the service and word-for-word prayers read or recited for the sacrament. “Sermons” are rare. Often three members—teens and adults, male and female—share the pulpit to read aloud church material or talk about topics assigned by the bishop: three little talks about honesty, or prophets, or sharing, for example.

*Originally cited in MOQ, Vol. 8 No. 4.

Notes: 1. Ballard, *Ensign*, Nov. '02. Ballard said, “...the standard for missionary service is being raised. The day of the ‘repent and go’ missionary is over.” 2. Monson, *Church News*, Oct. 26, '02. 3. *Church News*, Nov. 2, '02. 4. Mormon missionary tour guide, Salt Lake City, Nov. '02, telling of her experience a month earlier.