

Mormon religion can be attractive: great music, high moral standards, family orientation, both functional and ornate facilities, popular scouting and other traditional, practical programs. Mormons can be wonderful neighbors. So —

WHAT IF MY CHRISTIAN FRIEND THINKS MORMON RELIGION IS OKAY?

For suggestions, see "Principles" and "Q & A," page 2.

First, it helps to understand —

WHAT SOME PEOPLE LIKE ABOUT MORMON RELIGION

❑ **Mormon beliefs:** a new "gospel" for "itching ears" (see 2 Tim. 4:3-4).

- Everyone has a divine nature, being descended from heavenly parents.
- All men and women, including Jesus, are brothers and sisters from a heavenly realm, where all lived together and proved worthy of mortal life.
- A Heavenly Father and Mother wait to welcome back to heaven their mortal children who prove themselves worthy again.
- For those not worthy to return to the heavenly home, a loving Father will provide a glorious eternity anyway, regardless of religion, faith, or manner of life, with rare exceptions.
- If they do all the right things in mortality, some may achieve eternal life, become gods, and live with and expand their families forever.
- The dead can be saved, with help from the living.

❑ **Mormon authority.**

- There is only one "living prophet." Just follow him.
- There is only one true church organization. Just join it.
- New scriptures and the prophet add to, correct, and interpret the Bible.
- "Priesthood powers," and exclusive rituals, facilities, and clothing shape the everyday lives of members as they strive to gain eternal life.

❑ **Mormon stories.**

- Jesus visited the Americas shortly after the resurrection.
- Ancient Christian prophets lived in the Americas.
- Even Adam and Eve lived in what is today the United States.
- God brought Jesus to New York in 1820 to introduce the Son to a 14-year-old Joseph Smith, and by 1830 ancient scripture hidden more than a millennium earlier had been unearthed there and translated.
- John the Baptist first, then Peter, James, and John visited Smith in Pennsylvania; Moses, Elijah, and others visited him in Ohio.
- Prophets, persecution, pioneers; visions, violence, valor: all abound in stories Mormons tell of their new church in 19th century America.

❑ **Mormon Lifestyle.**

- *On the surface*, Mormon life can be attractive, especially to Christians, who share many of the ideals and standards.
- Others may admire Mormon life but not aspire to the standards.

PRINCIPLES

Warnings issued for specific circumstances in the New Testament suggest general principles for addressing today the Mormon claims for a "restored gospel" and revelations of new scriptures and ordinances necessary for eternal life; for Mormon prophets and apostles and their unique priesthood authority. Consider —

1. Christ spoke of "false Christs and false prophets." He said don't go and don't believe them (Matt. 24:23-26).
2. Paul spoke of "deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ," *appearing* to be "ministers of righteousness" (2 Cor. 11:13-15).
3. Paul wrote: "I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ" (Gal. 1:6-7; see also verses 9-10). He warned of subtle changes that can create "another," false Jesus, spirit, and gospel (2 Cor. 11:3-4).
4. John warned believers: don't receive or even wish well anyone trying to deliver altered doctrine (2 John 10).
5. Jude 3: "...earnestly contend for the faith once delivered unto the saints." [*Not* "once again delivered and corrected through Joseph Smith and *Latter-day* Saints, as they would have people believe.]

Some ideas. Some suggestions.

Q & A

❑ **What if my Christian friend thinks Mormon religion is okay?**

- Don't ignore it. Don't take it lightly.
- Take a friend's denial of real interest with a grain of salt. A friend may be embarrassed, and conversion can be unforeseen, impulsive, abrupt.
- If there is romantic attraction to a Mormon, address that.
- Don't leave a friend alone to explore Mormonism. Get pastoral or other help on any difficult theological issues.*
- Search the Bible, not Mormon materials, and pray together.
- If you must address specific Mormon errors, be accurate; then review the basic biblical truths of genuine Christian faith.
- Recommend against reading the Book of Mormon, accepting lessons from Mormon missionaries, and praying privately for a feeling of assurance that Mormonism is true.*
- Try to be present every time if there are Mormon missionary visits.
- Note with your friend the plain-English meaning of familiar words used by Mormons—how they often subtly change the simplicity of the Gospel into a difficult and unbiblical, albeit attractive, religion.
- Stick with it, even long after a flirtation with Mormonism may seem to be over.

* Two Mormon proselyting techniques:

- Ask people to pray *privately* to learn *directly* by revelation from Heavenly Father if the Book of Mormon and Mormon religion are true, expecting a comforting spiritual sensation.
- Isolate prospective converts (called "investigators") from their spiritual support, often posing tough questions about the Bible and offering a Mormon alternative.